THE MAKING OF JAZZ AND IMPROVISED MUSIC:
FOUR MUSICIANS' COLLECTIVES IN ENGLAND AND THE USA

A thesis, written by Will Menter between August 1976 and May 1981.

Submitted to the University of Bristol for the degree of Ph.D.
in Sociology, June 1981.

Preface January 2024

I wrote this over 40 years ago. It took five years of my life, but very few people have read it. From time to time someone asks me about it, but since I only have one physical copy I have always declined to lend it. Originally there were twelve copies and some of them may still exist. I can remember who I gave them to.

So I would say it is well overdue to scan the original and convert it into a reproducible PDF file, which is what I have just done.

Of course, I have re-read it too. Most of it I still like. I was a young man. It has some of the overconfidence or arrogance of youth but I can put up with that. Some of the narrative around race issues seems naive by today's standards. For example I spell Black always with a capital and white without, but I don't explain why. On gender, I seem to have been quite happy presuming that it was alright to use generalised male pronouns even though some of the people I was writing about were women.

I may have been over judgemental about musical colleagues. I think I would write differently now. But I own it. It was written from my passion for music and an honest expression of how I felt at the time. I wanted to really understand what each musician I talked to felt about their music, but I also wanted them to interact and respond to my own ideas. Maybe I sometimes got it wrong.

I was writing in an academic context and I was lucky enough to receive some public funding for pursuing my research. Yet it was important to me to write in a way that could be understood by a non-academic readership and indeed by the community of musicians that I was writing about. I had an acute awareness of the contradiction of intellectualising an activity whose very essence is in its practice rather than its theory. Maybe I failed in negotiating this borderline. On the one hand, my academic judges were critical of it and asked me to make changes that I didn't want to make. On the other hand I was unable to find a publisher who would make it into a book, or journals to publish extracts or articles. Hence it remained unread.

Reading my text now, one thing that jumps out at me is that it is clear that it is written by a musician who is involved deeply in the scene he is writing about and makes no attempt at creating distance between himself and his subject. In the end, I am looking at myself as much as I am looking at the four collectives and the history of jazz. This, I believe, is a legitimate approach and I think it is more widespread now than it was at the time I was writing. Charles Keil, one of the writers I quote and whose work I admire, has more recently admitted that he felt obliged to hide the fact that his acute observations on the nature of rhythm in jazz drumming came from his hands on experience as a drummer himself. He was writing in the 1960s and at the time he wanted to create an illusion of academic distance. Later he was able to free himself from this constraint and include himself in his analyses, which in my opinion, makes his work even stronger. (The subject is discussed by Keil with Steven Feld in their book Music Grooves, published in 1994)

I mention this in passing rather than to open a new subject of discussion. I am now far from the academic world having spent the last forty years in pursuing my own creative life in music and sound sculpture. I research the sounds of natural materials and I explore different ways of sharing this with the public. In recent years I have started calling myself an orchestrator of matter.

Even though I never pursued an academic career I can say without doubt that the five years from 1976 to 1981 working on this thesis set me on my life's course. I had the luxury of engaging in an artistic practice at the same time as analysing my own cultural context. I learnt how to write and I learnt how to make a dynamic interaction between my physical artistic creativity and my intellectual reflections. To have the space to do that was a great privilege.

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ABSTRACT

This work is a study of the social meanings of jazz and improvised music. It starts from the position that the meanings of cultural products can only be fully understood in relation to the social cultural context in which they are made and consumed. Thus the approach taken is to analyse particular musical performances not in purely musical terms, but in terms of the social organisation of the group, the emotions and world view expressed in the music, the social identity the music has in a complex and divided society, and the social function of the musical event.

The analysis focusses on four musicians' collectives, their members, and their musics. These are the Jazz Composers' Guild in New York, the Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians in Chicago, the Musicians' Co-operative in London, and the Bristol Musicians' Co-operative. They are all concerned in some sense with the avant-garde of jazz and improvised music, but within this they cover a wide range. Thus the analysis shows the different meanings that are expressed by the music for both audiences and musicians in terms of several contrasts: that between the USA and England, that between a metropolitan and a provincial context, and that between a professionally and a community oriented context. These contrasts are strongly reflected in the music and in certain situations it is shown how the music actually expresses them.

An introductory chapter about the musical and sociological nature of the jazz and improvised music tradition as a whole forms a basis for showing that these meanings expressed in the contemporary forms of the music are both a continuation and a development of those expressed in earlier forms. The tradition as a whole is characterised as balancing three pressures: from the market place, from the community, and from the musician as expressive 'artist'. Each moment in the tradition achieves this balance in a different way.

CONTENTS

Introduction	The Making of Jazz and Improvised Music	1
PART 1		
Chapter 1	The Music	
	i) Jazz and Straight Music	8
	ii) Improvisation	13
	iii) The Jazz Idiom	19
	iv) Jazz Musicians	28
	v) The Gramophone	38
Chapter 2	Writing, Meaning, Music	
	i) Writing about Music	46
	ii) Meanings, Social Meanings of Cultural Products, Jazz and Improvised Music	51
PART 2	THE U.S.A.	
Chapter 3	Chicago	77
	i) Two concerts	79
	ii) History leading to the Formation of the Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians (A.A.C.M.)	90
	iii) John Shenoy Jackson	109
	iv) Fred Anderson	116
	v) A.A.C.M. Music (Art Ensemble of Chicago, Stance)	126
	vi) Leo Smith	150
	vii) Achievements	169
Chapter 4	New York	
	i) History	174
	ii) The Jazz Composers' Guild (J.C.G.) (Bill Dixon, Paul Bley)	178
	iii) Developments	196
	iv) The New Muse	200

PART 3 ENGLAND

Chapter 5 Introduction 203

i) History 205
ii) Emulation 209
iii) Roots 217

Chapter 6 London

i) The Musicians' Co-operative (M.C.) 221
ii) The Composition/Improvisation Debate 232
iii) Improvisation, Jazz and Cultural History 253
iv) Social Meanings, Politics and Ways of Listening 265

Chapter 7 Bristol

i) Bristol Musicians' Co-operative 291
ii) Ron Caines 300
iii) Bob Helson 314
iv) Ian Menter 327
v) 'Doing It' 334

PART 4

Chapter 8 Comparisons and Reflections 337

Bibliography 355

Discography 364

Acknowledgements 368

INTRODUCTION

THE MAKING OF JAZZ AND IMPROVISED MUSIC

My subject is the social meaning of jazz and improvised music, in England and the USA. I call it making in order to include three different inter-related processes. Firstly, how the musicians make the music; secondly, how the music as a cultural product helps to make the society in which it exists; thirdly, the specific social conditions which are the making of the music - that is to say the conditions which make it, rather than break it, and allow it to continue to flourish.

I use perspectives from both sociology and musicology in a way that has not been very common up until now. Sociological studies of music have tended to concentrate on musical life without connecting it directly to the music (Howard S. Becker and others). Musicological studies have tended to concentrate on the technical structures of music, and when meaning has been discussed it has usually been in psychological rather than sociological terms (Leonard B. Meyer and others). Social meanings are sometimes discussed, but usually this amounts to little more than the personal interpretation of the music offered by the writer (for example the work of Wilfrid Mellers). Sometimes this is done perceptively and sometimes not.

The area of study that has been most consistently successful in combining these two perspectives is ethnomusicology, where much work has been done on showing how the structures and meanings of particular musics are inextricably bound up with the communities in which they exist. However, it is not possible to transfer the methods of ethnomusicology directly to the study of music in an advanced industrial society because in this case the music exists not just in a relationship to a community (if at all) but also in a relationship to an audience - that is a group of people defined primarily by their relationship to the music. In capitalist societies this relationship is most often a market one where the audience choose to buy musical commodities that are offered to them. But there are non-market music/audience

relationships too, for example in amateur music making and in music that is supported by state sponsorship. In socialist societies the music market-place is much more limited since control of musical content as well as economic transactions is often applied. Thus the insights of ethnomusicology have served as an inspiration rather than as a model for my own research. My main concern has been to make new connections between musical content and the social way in which it is produced, for a particular genre in two advanced capitalist societies.

The general area of study, jazz and improvised music, has arisen from my personal interests. Within this general area, I have chosen to focus my attention on four musicians' collectives, for the following reasons.

Firstly, the simple reason that musicians' collectives exist and I judge them to be an important part of the contemporary development of jazz and improvised music.

Secondly, music in general is an area of culture where much value is given to the unspoken, implicit feeling and intuitive understanding. There is thus a certain resistance amongst musicians and listeners to explaining music in words. I thought it important, in order to give my arguments weight, that they should as much as possible come from the musicians themselves. I wanted to be able to proceed by way of a dialogue between myself and the makers of the music rather than having to stand outside as an interpreter. This, I reasoned, I would be most likely to achieve in a context where musicians had already given much thought to the relationship between their music and society, and had taken radical action to change it. Hence, collectives.

Thirdly, since they exist in parallel in both England and the USA, they make a useful base for cross-cultural comparisons. It is part of the very essence of the jazz tradition that it has developed from a Black American music to being a music that is

created and listened to in most of the developed world. It follows that the comparison between England and the USA is essential to this thesis.

Fourthly, collectives provide a clear framework in which social forces which are essentially dynamic and fluid in nature can be seen to shape the music. Thus we can see how differences in the market situations and the historical and cultural situations of the four cities combine with the specific creative responses that the musicians make to these to give each music and collective its distinctive character.

The two American collectives I look at are the Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians (AACM) in Chicago, which I characterise as a Black musicians community association providing a decentralised alternative both to commercial music and to New York jazz; and the Jazz Composers' Guild (JCG) in New York which, for its brief existence, was a radical action and pressure group for young professional musicians, Black and white, diverse musically, but most of whom had already established some sort of international reputation. The two English collectives are the Musicians Co-operative (MC) in London which was a pressure group for young English professional musicians, but with a more cohesive musical character than the JCG; and the Bristol Musicians Co-operative (BMC) which is concerned with making music within a particular community mainly on a part-time basis, but is not specifically associated with an ethnic group.

The central issues that emerge are different in the two countries. In the USA there is a strong sense of being a continuation of the jazz and Black music tradition. Although the musicians are making new music, there are very strong cultural historical guidelines pushing them in certain directions. Within this context there are various contradictory pressures to which the two collectives and the individuals in them have responded in

different ways. These may be summarised as pressures from the Black community, pressures from the market place, and the internal pressure for the musician to respond to his inner needs as an artist. It is important to realise that all these pressures lie within the tradition of Black jazz. It is not, for example, a case of choosing between traditional authenticity and commercial success since the tradition includes various strands of commercially successful music within it.

The other central issue in America is race because, as I shall argue in Chapter one, jazz has always been a music for both Black and white audiences and has been able to fulfill the requirements of these in different ways. As well as being primarily associated with a particular race, Black Americans, jazz has also been about race.

In England, the jazz tradition, rather than being the overall context, becomes an issue in itself. For although the musicians I discuss have grown up with it, many of them now question the legitimacy of identifying themselves with this foreign tradition. So while there are parallel pressures from the market, and from the musicians' inner needs as artists, the pressure from the community does not exist in the same way. In a few cases this is replaced by class allegiances, but more often the concept of professionalism becomes an issue. The non-hierarchical aspects of the way the music is produced become important, and consequently the idea that the music is accessible, that anyone can do it too. This may conflict with professional aims which imply building up a passive audience rather than active involvement.

Although the major contrasts to be made are between the two countries, there are some strong parallels between the organisations in Chicago and Bristol and between those in New York and London. Thus the AACM and BMC can both be described as anti-metropolitan and decentralised in their approaches whereas the JCG and the MC tend more towards professionalism and individual success.

The four chapters on the collectives are organised in rather different ways. An obvious difference is that in Chicago and Bristol I discuss the issues in terms of personal biographies whereas in New York and London I organise the discussion around the actual issues. This partly reflects the different natures of the organisations, but as well as this it reflects my different relationship with them and the different sort of material I was able to obtain.

In Chicago most of the interviews were conducted during a four month visit in the winter of 1977/78. Apart from hearing their records and reading occasional articles about them in the jazz magazines this was my first contact with the musicians. It was natural therefore that the interviews should be long and wide-ranging, for they represent not only my first direct contact with these specific musicians, but also with Black Americans as a whole. In London and especially in Bristol I already knew most of the musicians and it was more appropriate that the interviews should explore particular issues in a detail that was sometimes exhaustive. These all contrasted with New York where it was difficult to gather any information at all. The JCG had already been dead for 12 years when I was asking about it and many of the musicians involved had neither the time nor the inclination to talk about it. In terms of the primary material then, the New York section is thinner than the other three, but the issues were made very clear by the two musicians I was able to talk to at length and information about the scene since the JCG was plentiful. I have not discussed the actual music of the New York musicians, partly because it is more diverse than in the other collectives (this in itself is significant), and partly because many of the individuals are described adequately elsewhere. (Free Jazz by Ekkehard Jost includes chapters on Cecil Taylor, Archie Shepp, Albert Ayler and Sun Ra).

My own relationship with them brings me to my fifth reason for

choosing collectives as my subject. That is my desire to explain Bristol. Although Bristol comes last in this thesis this is because many of the arguments lead towards it, and conceptually it is my starting point. My underlying motivation has been to gain a deeper understanding of the meaning and future possibilities of this sort of cultural practice in a fairly typical provincial English city. The reason for this is that I have myself been a member of the Bristol Musicians Co-operative since it started in 1975. I thus write from a very firm practical commitment. My hope is that from writing this thesis not only will the BMC be better able to decide on its future cultural actions, but also that its actions will be better understood by the world in which it acts. Ultimately I intend it to be a small contribution to making the music a deeper and more pleasurable experience.

Before the chapters on the four collectives are two introductory chapters which form an indispensable background for understanding the discussions that follow. Chapter one is a brief survey of the musical and sociological characteristics of jazz and improvised music especially in comparison to the straight music tradition.[1] I look at the different roles that it is possible for jazz musicians to take and also at the importance of the gramophone to the development of the tradition. In Chapter two I set out the more theoretical concerns of the thesis discussing first some difficulties of writing about music and second the general ways in which music and other cultural products may express social meanings and third the specific social meanings which are expressed by jazz and improvised music and will be the concerns of this thesis.

1. I use the term 'straight music' to refer to the whole tradition of European-American art music as it is taught in the academies and conservatories, including what are normally called classical, romantic, baroque, modern and so on. It seems less misleading than alternative generic terms such as 'classical' or 'serious' or 'concert' music (although I use these too when appropriate).

Chapters three and four are about the two American collectives in Chicago and New York, respectively. Chapter five is an introduction to the English scene, again both musical and sociological, and this is followed by Chapters six and seven on the collectives in London and Bristol. In the conclusion, Chapter eight, I make explicit some of the comparisons that have been implied by the juxtaposition of the four collectives and make a partial assessment of their significance and futures.

PART 1

CHAPTER 1: THE MUSIC

i) Jazz and Straight Music

Jazz is essentially the classical instrumental music of Black Americans. Any music that claims this tradition as its basis may be included under the heading. I am not interested here in defining the borderlines of jazz, or deciding exactly what is and what isn't jazz. Rather I wish to explore the nature of the mainstream of the music, isolate the characteristics that serve to make this music different from other musics, and also show how the attitudes and ideas of the musicians are related to these features.

Jazz is a music that covers a wide range of musical and social forms and as such is often only partially understood. In general, the vaguer notions about it tend to associate it with popular music. In England, where a re-creation of traditional jazz gained a mass audience in the 1950s it is often thought of as a way of adolescents letting off steam. Good fun. In the USA it may be thought of as that music which people play in the background in bars or else as the music which accompanied the 'carefree' days of the 1920s.

A slightly more sophisticated, 'liberal' version places jazz half way between popular music and European classical music. It is serious and has significant meaning, but is not as serious and hasn't such a deep meaning as European classical music. This view has been reflected in the curricula of the more progressive music colleges in both England and the USA where jazz is often included as an area of study ('at least worthy of serious study') important for the general knowledge of the schooled musician, along with ethnic musics and certain kinds of rock music.

The nature of jazz in comparison to classical and popular music has always been of concern to jazz writers. Since one of their main aims has been to legitimize jazz in the eyes of the straight music establishment most general overviews of jazz have included a chapter or more on this subject. One typical approach is to play down critical comparisons between styles of music in favour of distinguishing the criteria for quality within a particular style. For example Sidney Finkelstein wrote in 1948:

> There are not two worlds of music, but only one. Within this one world there are many different kinds of music. The division however, between "classical" and "popular", "highbrow" and "lowbrow", has no meaning whatsoever as a test of quality. Jazz is not simply a great "popular" music but a great music.
>
> Sidney Finkelstein, Jazz: A People's Music, p.9.

Finkelstein uses this as a starting point for a discussion of the differences between the sorts of music he mentions and argues that there is no direct relationship between the technical complexity or relative scale of a work and its emotional complexity or meaning. He goes on to imply that jazz shares its quality of emotional depth with the great European composers of the 18th and 19th centuries (Mozart, Beethoven, etc.) and that this quality is actually lacking in most contemporary American straight music.

> Added up, this genuine creation within jazz is an imposing production, the most important and lasting body of music yet produced in the United States.
>
> ibid, p.11.

In fact, Finkelstein has made a subtle twist in his argument to use his denial of commonly used categories not to support a pluralism of aesthetics as was expected but to argue that

jazz is actually better. In other words he is saying: rather than think of 'classical' music as better than 'popular' music, we should actually look directly at the 'goodness' of music. And if we do this we find that there is more 'good' jazz than 'good' contemporary straight music. So in relation to our own time jazz is better music.

Finkelstein was writing partly in reaction to earlier emotional exaggerations of the case for jazz by writers such as Rudi Blesh who in 1946 wrote that "with (jazz) Western music as we know it disappears and its composers, too", [1] and he presents a much subtler argument for jazz than most of the early books on the music.

The English writer Francis Newton, [2] writing ten years later, perhaps because he was nearer the heart of the 'classical' tradition, was less willing to throw it out as being less emotional, but keener to establish the relevance of different musics to different classes. With Finkelstein he chastised the avant-garde straight composers for losing touch with their public and popular music for its extreme commerciality. But Beethoven and jazz are considered differently:

> The history of the arts is not one history, but, in every country, at least two; that of the arts as practised or enjoyed by the wealthy leisured minority, and that of the arts as practised or enjoyed by the mass of the common people. Beethoven's last quartets, for instance, belong almost entirely to the first; it is reasonably certain that even in Vienna very few members of the average football crowd would accept even free tickets to hear them.

1. Quoted by Finkelstein, p.7.

2. Francis Newton was a pseudonym used by the social historian Eric Hobsbawm when writing about jazz.

> On the other hand, in Britain certain kinds of music-hall comic belong almost entirely to the second.
>
> Francis Newton, The Jazz Scene, p.16.

Jazz, Newton argues, even though it emanates from the masses, is an art form that is sufficiently powerful in itself to become a universal art acknowledged by both the minority public and the masses. Even so, "when the books are written 'culture' or 'the arts' means minority culture and the minority arts".

Yet, later on in the book, in his concern to define "The Musical Achievement" of jazz Newton himself uses the terms in the manner which he attacks.

> Taken in isolation, no recorded version of the blues How Long is a great work of art, in the serious sense, though many of them are extremely moving, and though the tune is beautiful and the poetry good.... The important, and artistically valid, thing is that this theme should produce works as different as Count Basie's orchestral-cum-vocal version, the late Jimmy Yancey's beautiful piano solo, or Joe Turner's shouting blues; and that it should remain alive, and capable of stimulating every group of players who touch it to produce their own music: some good, some mediocre, some poor, but, given a certain competence and feeling, all of it genuinely touching and genuine music.
>
> ibid, p.145.

Thus in a way Newton is reversing Finkelstein's position. Where Finkelstein argued from a statement of pluralism towards the superiority of jazz, Newton argues from a class separatism towards only a qualified approval of jazz. Thus while jazz is "genuine", "alive", and "genuinely touching", it is still not "great art". There is still something missing that does not quite bring it up to the level of the "minority culture". I

am extrapolating from Newton's argument here and in the context of his book, which is concerned primarily with giving a thoughtful overview of the jazz scene with a slightly added weight being given to social questions, the contradiction is not important. Nevertheless, it gives a feeling of ambiguity to Newton's position on the status of jazz.

However, the main point I want to make from Newton and Finkelstein (and these are merely two of the most clearly argued of countless similar statements) is that it is clear that jazz critics are basically on the defensive when trying to legitimize jazz, for they are forced into actually using a language that is designed to uphold the minority culture whose supremacy they are attacking. Thus to argue for the value and relevance of jazz as art requires a redefinition of the concept of art as used by the dominant culture. If this concept is to be used at all it would have to be taken away from the idea of a fixed and timeless cultural product towards a consideration of the art of performance in real time. It is interesting that artistic practice in other art forms has in recent years tended towards treating art as an activity rather than a product. Obvious examples are the action painting movement, collectively directed theatre and the general area of performance art. Jazz can be seen as an early expression of this general cultural development in the advanced capitalist societies of the west.

ii) Improvisation

Jazz is a music of performance. It is created by improvising instrumentalists at the time of its performance. Composers have only a subsidiary role in jazz. Much of the meaning of jazz stems from this simple fact. The aspects of the music which are normally considered the most important and which give it its unique character are all ones that are impossible to notate accurately on a score. Thus it may be said that it is part of the essence of jazz that it is oriented towards performance.

The jazz musician, then, is an improvisor, and for many followers of classical music this disqualifies the music from serious attention from the start. For them improvisation is often associated with randomness and the aleatoric procedures used by composers such as John Cage, and is thus the antithesis of what music is meant to be about. Most definitions of music revolve around the fact of it being non-verbal sound that is produced and ordered by human beings, the factor which distinguishes it from natural sounds being the imposed order. It is true that improvisation is sometimes used as a means of simulating randomness (mainly by avant-garde straight composers from the Cage school) but in most of the music produced throughout the world improvisation has had very little to do with randomness. Rather it is an alternative approach to structure and order.

The antithesis between composition and improvisation actually conceals a variety of modes as well as degrees of controlling and ordering the sound. At one extreme is the classical orchestra which works from a score constructed by a composer, the aim being to give the performing musicians the fullest possible written instructions about what they are to do. Of course it is impossible to be totally exhaustive about this. Much musical research is concerned with finding out what dead

composers really meant and defining the correct way to interpret their scores. In the orchestra the conductor is given the job of deciding this and he must tell the players whether they are doing it right or not. The underlying concept is that there is a communication to be made that is ultimately definable and that the players' job is to transmit this communication from the composer to the listeners. Thus the performance is not concerned with real time at all. It is concerned with denying the real time of the concert taking place and transporting the listener into the idealised time of the composer. A performance of this music is actually an exact repetition of the last rehearsal. The presence of an audience may stimulate a higher level of concentration and hence a better performance, but there will be no fundamental differences in the sound between performance and rehearsal.

At the other extreme is totally spontaneous free improvisation where there are no rules about what should be done and what shouldn't and nothing is predetermined. In this case it is difficult to distinguish music from everyday life since it will largely depend on how it is listened to whether it is music or not. Thus anyone who happens to be there may join in, using whatever sound sources they happen to have with them. (In fact there need only be a listener and no musicians, for the sound of people walking down the street combined with distant traffic noises and a blackbird singing in a tree may be considered music just as much as four people sitting in a room deliberately making sounds for an audience). It is clear that this music would be concerned very much with real time. The actual moment of creation, the here and now, is being focussed on. If there has been any rehearsal for the music it will only form part of the long causal chain that has made the musicians act as they do at this moment, rather than being an attempt to fix the form of the music. The relationship between performance and rehearsal will be developmental rather than repetitive.

These then are two models of the extremes of music making with respect to their treatment of time. None of the music to be discussed in this thesis is accurately portrayed by these two extremes (although some of it approaches the second) but is concerned with the middle ground. This middle ground is not concerned with either the totally spontaneous creation of a moment or the reconstruction of a previous moment. It is more concerned with using flexible modes of control to create the experience of spontaneity (or some would argue the illusion of spontaneity). It is thus concerned very much with humanness, the nature of human activity, because rather than starting from the idea of pure spontaneity it starts from the idea of practically increasing spontaneity within the specific context of the limitations of human capacities to act and perceive.

Because improvised music is made directly and spontaneously by performing musicians it is actually impossible to separate the individual sounds from the musicians who make them and analyse the music as one would a composition. Each sound must be treated as a deliberate action on the part of a particular musician in the context of the sounds made by the other musicians. Except in the case of solo improvisations, the overall sound will be a complex combination of all the individual sounds and their developing relationships. Thus when I talk about controlling the music I am talking about a very different process from traditional notated music because this control is inseparable from controlling the musicians. The way this control is achieved in different sorts of improvisation is very much a part of the music, and the subtlety and variation in techniques for this certainly contradict the idea that improvisation is random or anarchic.

Just to make a crude outline of the possible processes involved, I suggest the following as variables of control that are often used in improvised music of many different sorts:

1. The hierarchical structure of the group. Whether there is a leader, who says what should or shouldn't happen, or not.
2. If there is a leader, the way in which he or she leads. Whether by laying down tight guidelines for the whole performance (for instance the leader might say "We should play rhythmically the whole time") or by exerting subtle influence when he or she feels things are going wrong. (He or she might play rhythmically when it is required and expect the others to join him or her).
3. If there is no leader, whether there is a mutual understanding about the limits of the music and the ways of controlling it.
4. The precision of control. In some music there is a broad control over what happens when but details are considered less important. In this case the control is to ensure that the musicians are working towards the same end and not contradictory ones. A control over the precise details would suggest a meaning to be communicated other than that of the playing itself and would then be closer to composition.

This list is very basic, but it should be easy for the reader to imagine its more detailed extension because it is simply a description of the variables present in social relationships at an interpersonal level.

The next important thing to consider is the purpose of the control, and it is here that we come to an important distinction to be made within the world of improvised music which has been pointed out by Derek Bailey (one of the members of the Musicians Co-operative in London). This is the distinction between free improvisation and idiomatic improvisation. In free improvisation, the aim is the free expression of individuals within a group in a non-hierarchical way. There is only one strictly legitimate objective to control systems and that is as a means of clarifying the meaning of the music which is already inherent in the players, individually and collectively. It can be used as a way of deliberately avoiding certain areas of

confusion, which can arise from groups of musicians expressing themselves freely simultaneously. The practical effect is that some of the decision making that falls on the players is taken away and they are able to concentrate on other aspects of their playing. One form this might take is simply deciding who should play when, or if there are some relatively quiet instruments in the group, making sure they are heard. The actual content of the playing would not be controlled since the intention is to increase the efficiency of communication rather than change the meaning (although these are not completely separable).

In idiomatic improvisation the aim is to be part of an ongoing musical tradition which is culturally distinct and is felt to have significant meaning in itself. Personal originality of expression is far less important in this music. Most of the improvised music in the world would fall into this category: Indian classical music, mush of the music of Africa and the Middle East, some sorts of jazz. In these control can be legitimately extended to cover the whole language to be used in the music to ensure that it is authentic with respect to the tradition.

Derek Bailey has encapsulated the difference between idiomatic and free improvisation very concisely:

> For him (the idiomatic improvisor), everything, including his freedom, must serve his idiom. For the free improvisor everything, including his music, must serve his freedom.
>
> D. Bailey, Improvisation: Its Nature and Practice in Music, p.151.

We are again talking of conceptual models of particular types of improvisation which in any real music will not be found in their pure form. Moreover the music to be discussed in this thesis is specially concerned with the dynamic tension between

the two forms, because jazz is an idiom that includes a requirement for a high rate of musical innovation and personal originality as an important part of the idiom.

The main purpose of this section has been to show the processes, both personal and cultural that go into making improvised music and help to give it meaning. It is thus possible now to talk more specifically about the jazz idiom.

iii) The Jazz Idiom

Two concepts are basic to the jazz idiom - sound and swing. They would both be mentioned in any assessment of a jazz player: "He has a good sound, but he doesn't swing".

The jazz musician's approach to instrumental sound is totally different from the straight musician's. In jazz the sound happens between the musician and the instrument. It is a product of working with the instrument, of coaxing the maximum amount of expressiveness out of it. Crucially it must have a personal quality to it. In straight music the sound happens outside both musician and instrument - the aim is for a neutrality capable of interpreting scores by different composers and of being replaced by another musician playing the same instrument. Where the straight sound is clean and pure the jazz sound is dirty and rich. There are wide variations between individuals but even the cleanest of jazz players will use occasional smears and glissandos that would be totally out of place in straight music. Most jazz is so full of growls, shouts, trills, slides, wide vibratos, sudden crescendos, wah-wah effects, thatit's recognisable as such after hearing only a couple of notes. The jazz sound also includes a special kind of presence or attack which increases the 'here and now' quality of the music. Each note is given a special vibrancy so we can almost say it has a meaning all on its own without even being in the context of a piece. This presence, this immediacy in the music, this overt expressive sensuality, even manages to create a feeling of spontaneity in types of jazz which are largely unimprovised such as the big bands where much of the music is composed section playing. There is no way that a composer could direct a player to play like this, with a jazz sound, for it comes from the sincerity and truth of the music, from someone playing themselves and for themselves, not for someone else.

This applies too to jazz rhythm or swing. It can't be directed

by a composer but must be learnt by musicians playing together. A precise definition of how swing is produced has eluded jazz theorists but the feeling of it is clear. It produces an intense forward movement in the music combined with a feeling of relaxation and unhurriedness. It makes you want to move your body, not necessarily to dance but at least tap your foot or sway your hips. The rhythmic accents are handled in such a way as to produce a very subtle rise and fall in the music, a feeling of uninhibited flowing.

The basic feeling of swing is not produced by syncopation, but the two together give jazz its rhythmic character. Syncopation in jazz is a matter of playing around with the beat, of placing notes in between beats, of slightly delaying them and of playing notes in rhythmic groups that actually contradict the basic beat. This all has to be done with exceptional accuracy and feeling or else it will destroy the feeling of swing rather than enhance it. Although one musician can swing on his own, it is basically a group concept as the pianist Wally Rose describes:

> The only way I can describe swinging is it's the kind of rhythmic movement where you can place a note where and when it's due. The only thing that keeps you together is when the whole band meets on this beat, meets on the split second you all think the beat is due. The slightest deviation from that causes tension and frustration. And the musicians will feel that tension immediately, even where the audience wouldn't detect it. In a jazz band you have to listen to each other and feel together.

quoted in Shapiro and Hentoff, Hear Me Talkin' to Ya, p.389.

Some writers have suggested that music other than jazz swings. For example in his history of popular music All You Need Is Love, Tony Palmer claims that:

> The Viennese waltz, played in the right place and in the right conditions undeniably swings.
>
> Tony Palmer, All You Need Is Love, p.143.

but most serious followers of jazz would not agree with him. Many would argue that if it did swing it would no longer be a Viennese waltz. The rhythmic feeling in jazz is produced once more only by actually playing and by making very subtle adjustments to the music to suit the moment. This is impossible in a totally scored piece. Other musics of performance (certainly much African music) get nearer to the feeling of swing, but even then there are substantial differences. (Gunther Schuller analyses some of the differences between African drumming rhythms and jazz swing in Early Jazz, pp.6-26).

From the way I have described jazz sound and jazz rhythm, then, it might be said that these two elements are the expression of an intensified moment produced by performing musicians. They are the method by which improvisors create a greater depth and emotional intensity to their music without recourse to the restrictions of composition. This is not to say that other factors such as development and form aren't relevant to jazz but just that they have less relative importance than in straight music.

Several writers writing more recently than Finkelstein and Newton have sought to legitimize jazz in the actual terms used by musicologists in describing straight music. Two examples of this are Andrew Chester and Charles Keil. Both their analyses centre around the different articulation of time in jazz and straight music. (Chester is actually writing about rock music but his comments are equally valid for jazz). As well as serving to legitimize jazz they also serve as an attack on the ethnocentricity of much musicology.

Chester draws a contrast between the extensional development straight music and the intensional development of rock music.

> Western classical music is the apodigm of the extensional form of musical construction. Theme and variations, counterpoint, tonality (as used in classical composition) are all devices that build diachronically and synchronically outwards from basic musical atoms. The complex is created by combination of the simple, which remains discrete and unchanged in the complex unity.....
>
> Rock however follows, like many non-European musics, the path of intensional development. In this mode of construction the basic musical units (played/sung notes) are not combined through space and time as simple elements into complex structures. The simple element is that constituted by the parameters of melody, harmony and beat while the complex is built up by modulation of the basic notes, and by inflexion of the basic beat.
>
> A. Chester, Second Thoughts on a Rock Aesthetic: The Band pp.78-9.

A simple analogy to this contrast is the difference between building a structure out of bricks, small fixed ingredients of many shapes and sizes, and modelling something out of a piece of clay, highly malleable and adaptable but without the structural strength of bricks, and limited to its original volume. There are also connections to be made with cultural oppression, for the use of intensional development can be seen as a way of making the most out of limited material, of finding hidden riches of expressiveness in mundane materials. The concentration on the moment then can be seen as a creative response to oppression.[1]

1. This is supported by P. Virden and T. Wishart in Some Observations on the Social Stratification of 20th Century Music (in Whose Music?) and is discussed further in Chapter two of this thesis (page 61).

Jazz, Chester suggests, is actually situated between these two models and its history has been a tendency to develop away from intensional towards extensional development with occasional reactions in the opposite direction ('back to the roots' movements).

Keil bases his comparison on a contrast between music which relies on embodied meaning for its communication and that which relies on engendered feeling. Again the contrast may be seen in terms of concepts of time. In 'embodied meaning' music each part has a logical syntactical relationship to the whole and the gratification in listening to it is deferred. It comes at the end of the piece on seeing the complete form. In 'engendered feeling' music the time emphasis is inwards. The music is actually a process of working towards a high state of constant and instant gratification. One could add that it is often disappointing when this sort of music stops since the pleasure is concentrated on the actual moment of performance.

> Somewhat paradoxically, I must admit, the pulse-meter-rhythm tensions of jazz are immensely gratifying, even relaxing in themselves, in a way that extended arpeggios in composed music are not. To the extent that you feel like tapping your foot, snapping your fingers or dancing, gratification is also constant, and when a jazz fan does not feel like doing this, he begins to question the merits of the group that provides the stimulus.
>
> Similarly, when a jazz buff wants to convince you that a particular performer is great, he is likely to point to a single gesture, a portion of the music in which the musician is playing with the pulse in a particularly perverse manner, asking simultaneously, "Isn't that bit a gas?" To exaggerate slightly, a classics fan will wait respectfully until the piece is finished, or, better still, put a score in your lap and ask "Do you see how beautifully it all fits together?"

Charles Keil, Motion and Feeling in Music, p.347.

These responses are echoed by audiences at concerts. At a classical concert audiences restrain their responses to the end of the piece because it is felt that to applaud in the middle, even between movements, would endanger the unified logical progression of the piece. At a jazz concert, the audience applaud when they are excited or feel good, often at the end of a solo or during a particularly satisfying bit in the middle of a solo. In this case the two way communication between performers and audience is considered more important than the unity of the form, and thus the spontaneity of the moment is acknowledged.

To recap briefly, I have characterised jazz as being the form of idiomatic instrumental improvisation made by Black Americans, having the specific features of a rich and complex sound and a special sort of rhythm known as swing, and I have shown how these two features and also the intellectual legitimations of jazz revolve around the idea of intensifying and enriching the moment, or indeed of enriching time itself. The idiom is a highly specific one and any piece of music either within it or referring to it is easily recognisable as such. Sound and rhythm come into this, but so do the specific instrumentation used by jazz groups (wind instruments with rhythm sections), the distinctive scales and harmonies that are used (the various forms of the blues scale and chorus structure), and many other small details.

The argument this far has concentrated on the actual musical event. However, it will already have been deduced that the characteristics of jazz that I have chosen to emphasise have been closely connected with the specific culture in which jazz has been made. In other words I have shown how it differs from European and Euro-American music and have thus implied what its meaning within that culture as a whole might be. I am of course writing as a European and if I were writing from the point of

view of, for example, African music my description of jazz would be totally different. The image I have been building up of the music has basically been one of otherness.

Jazz is initially an expression of African-American culture within America which as a whole is dominated by European culture. For the Black Americans it is an expression of their community. It happens within their community and the values it upholds are the values of their community. Because of changes in the American class structure through this century, especially the growth of the Black middle class, the social meaning of jazz within the Black community has changed considerably. Leroi Jones has explored these changes in his book Blues People.

> The most expressive Negro music of any given period will be an exact reflection of what he himself is. It will be a portrait of the Negro in America at that particular time. Who he thinks he is, what he thinks America or the world to be, given the circumstances, prejudices, and delights of that particular America.
>
> Leroi Jones, Blues People, p.137.

Thus Jones argues that jazz is a music that is able to reflect the changing class relationships within America. By its degree of Africanness, it can express the change in consciousness from 'ex-slave' to 'citizen' which Jones identifies in the Black middle class. It is able to do this because even the earliest jazz in New Orleans was already an Afro-Euro-American music having grown out of the complex class structure of New Orleans. For here the Creoles predated the Black middle class at the end of the last century. Their aim was to emulate French society and culture and to dissociate themselves from Blacks. However around 1900 stricter segregation laws were brought in and Creoles and Blacks were forced together, physically and culturally. This brought a fusion of the Creole European influenced style and the Black African blues based style and

out of this jazz emerged.[1] Jones goes on to show how the successive styles of jazz reflect different attitudes towards America and towards the Black culture.

He also argues convincingly that jazz was able to gain a wide popularity amongst white Americans as well as Blacks because of this fusion element. However, the meaning was different as he suggests in his comparison between the Black and white trumpet players Louis Armstrong and Bix Beiderbecke whose playing was based on completely different stances. And this would apply to the way the music is listened to as well.

> Beiderbecke was an instinctive intellectual who had a musical taste that included Stravinsky, Schoenberg and Debussy, and had an emotional life that, as it turned out, was based on his conscious or unconscious disapproval of most of the sacraments of his culture. On the other hand, Armstrong was, in terms of emotional archetypes, an honored priest of his culture - one of the most impressive products of his society. Armstrong was not rebelling against anything with his music. In fact, his music was one of the most beautiful refinements of Afro-American musical tradition, and it was immediately recognized as such by those Negroes who were not busy trying to pretend that they had issued from Beiderbecke's culture.
>
> ibid, p.154.

So for Black musicians and audiences the music came from within their culture and was able to express all sorts of aspirations about the future of their own lives and culture, while for whites it must always be in some sense a rebellion against their own class and culture. For them it offered an alternative. It was an expression of direct sensuality and a liberation of

1. See Marshall Stearns, The Story of Jazz, Chapters 4 and 5 for an account of class relationships in New Orleans during the formative years of early jazz.

the body. "A glimpse into the Black world of feeling".[1] Yet at the same time it had a degree of abstraction whose absence in the Blues made it impossible for that music to be taken up as a wholly American culture in the way jazz was.

1. A phrase used by Dave Holland in an interview with the author.

iv) Jazz Musicians

Jazz, as I have said, is a music of performance and is made by groups of people together; it is a collectively made music. But at the same time there is a very strong strain of individualism running through it. For Paul Bley, who is one of the musicians who will be discussed in the New York section, this side of the music is uppermost.

> You're dealing with a subject that's American. Improvising is an American subject. The glorification of the individual. [1]

By contrast, Leo Smith, who will be discussed in the Chicago section, believes that the emphasis on the individual improvisor is actually a misinterpretation of history by the critics:

> most of the "music analysts" who have allegedly transcribed the solo-lines of the great masters, however, have misinterpreted them by not transcribing the whole of the line, but by singling out, instead, only one element of the line. in the evaluation of this music, the opinion has been that the solo-line is the creation of a "soloist", and that the other improvisors involved are mere accompaniment. this is an invalid evaluation. the solo-line, in fact, is created by all improvisors contributing to it (any combination of reeds, brass, bass, drums, and piano): all the component parts become the solo-line. a "solo" alone can only be created by one improvisor.
>
> Leo Smith, notes: 8 pieces, (no page numbers).

The jazz tradition requires of players that they strive for their own unique sound and style at the same time as fitting in to the group and fulfilling the idiomatic requirements in sound and rhythm. It certainly isn't true as Paul Bley went on to say that every improvisor "is trying to be the best improvisor in

1. This quotation and all others without references are from interviews with the author conducted from 1977 to 1979.

the world', but there is an ongoing tension in the history of jazz between individualism and collectivism. In general from the 1920s onwards the music developed towards a heightened expression of individualism. The New Orleans jazz of the 1910s was almost completely collective. The musicians interweaved their solo lines and only occasionally would the band stop and leave a single player to make a one or two bar break on his own. There was great scope for individual expression, but individual musicians weren't actually featured. From then until 1960 the idea of the featured soloist became more and more prominent until a typical jazz performance would consist of a short tune played by everyone, followed by a string of solos each accompanied by the rhythm section of piano, bass and drums. Solos gradually became longer and technically more and more complex to a point where it was even claimed that it had become impossible for a collective music to be made.

For example, Cecil Taylor, one of the major innovators of the 1960s (and a member of the JCG), was criticized by the English writer and composer Wilfrid Mellers for attempting a collective music that was too complex.

> Cecil Taylor ... has taken the bold step of creating a polyphonic texture in which all the lines attempt a Parker-like complexity. 1.

However it fails because

> it would need a genius of Parker's calibre on each instrument, and would then be too much for the human ear and nerves to assimilate.
>
> Wilfrid Mellers, Music in a New Found Land, p.345.

1. See pages 48-9.

However, Mellers' judgement of 1964 was premature since many of the important innovations of the 60s were actually based on making a new and different collective music that was based not on a 'Parker-like complexity' but on a complete reordering of ideas about form and the relationships between individuals in a collective. In short the musicians stance was radically altered as I will show later (in the Chicago chapter - 3(v)).

In any case Leo Smith's statement reminds us that even at the most individualist stages of its history jazz has been a collectively made music. The roles played by individuals and collectives have changed but interaction of one sort or another has been an essential ingredient of the tradition. And this can be traced back to the call and response patterns of the early field hollers and work songs and also of much African music.

A jazz musician, then, has been expected to be himself, not to imitate, but to develop his own personal style. Also, if possible, he has had to do this in a way that would enhance the collective expression of the music, the group. Individual styles and the collective form have defined the dialectic that has resulted in the exceptionally high rate of musical innovation and development which has been another characteristic of jazz. Innovations in individual style must be met with changes in the collective form and vice versa for the music to retain its coherence. In the 80 years or so of its known history the music has gone through at least four major stylistic revolutions from New Orleans to swing to bebop to free jazz, and in each of these the ways individuals changed their playing and the ways groups changed their way of playing together was equally important.

Jazz is unique in this respect, being a music that is essentially of the 20th century. Its rapid artistic change and growth has coincided with the social changes of the century in a way that has enabled it to exploit both the growth of media techniques for widespread dissemination of recorded sound and the

increasingly complex marketing networks of the world.

There are three factors that have influenced this high rate of musical innovation in jazz. Firstly, straightforward economic competitiveness causing musicians to seek a distinctive style which will sell. Secondly, the developing idea of the jazz musician as artist, having something inside that he must at all costs express. This idea of striving towards a profound personal expression is something that is taken for granted by European artists, but it developed specifically in the early 19th century as a way of distinguishing a different sort of creative activity from the capitalist production of commodities which was by then dominant. [1] In the case of jazz this combined with American pioneer individualism - Paul Bley style [2] - to meet the changing class position of Blacks in America.

Thirdly, the need felt through the jazz idiom itself to preserve the immediacy and spontaneity of the moment. For it is the paradox of idiomatic improvisation, that as soon as a moment becomes fixed or defined within an idiom, it immediately loses this quality of intensified time that I have referred to. It can only make reference to the previous moment, and of course the memory will become weaker as time goes on. If the moment is going to be genuinely re-created the music must move on and find a new way of creating the intense now. If idiomatic expression is to remain truly a music of performance it must change. And this applies as much to the individual musician as to the music as a whole. This can create problems for musicians. The natural tendency is for them to invest so much energy and emotion in developing their own style that by the time they have done so they have actually lost the capacity or the desire to change. A personal style then effectively becomes

1. See Raymond Williams, Keywords, pp.32-4.

2. See Chapter 4 (ii).

an idiom in itself and the ability to create a new moment becomes rarer.

Up till now in this discussion of jazz musicians I have been assuming that the jazz musician is a conscious artist and that the audience is an art audience. I have suggested that to be meaningful the music must be developing. However, as the music develops there grow up behind it various reproductions of the previous moments in its history and these can be a contrary force on the innovatory musician. In other words as well as there being a force that demands innovation and a strong personal contribution, there is another force that forbids it and demands an extreme conformity to a particular version of the idiom. It may be associated with locality as the tenor player Frank Lowe described to Valerie Wilmer:

> In Memphis today Coltrane, Dolphy and Ornette are known and respected, but in order to get a response from a local audience, you still have to go down there with a boogaloo thing happening.
>
> Valerie Wilmer, As Serious As Your Life, p.136.

Of course boogaloo is only an example but it points to the fact that for many audiences music serves a very specific emotional function in that it confirms their way of looking at the world. In this case it is the idiom itself that is the important thing and for a musician to work for an audience of this kind it is necessary for him to identify very strongly with both the idiom and the community. Although the function is specific, it still must include a creative approach to the production of the moment since this is the way the emotional patterns work. Although I call them emotional patterns they are likely to show themselves as very physical feelings in the body.

It may be said that there are two possible careers as jazzman. Firstly, the career of the artist striving for an original creative expression that is a genuine development of the jazz tradition, and secondly, the career of the community entertainer committed to fulfilling the requirements of a particular audience through his interpretation of the jazz idiom. Historically the former career has become more and more common but at the same time it is natural for a musician to gradually change from the former career to the latter as he grows older.

In terms of the consciousness of the musician this is a question of whether he considers himself an artist or an entertainer. Does he respond only to his internal needs or does he adapt himself to the needs expressed by members of the community in which he works? Historically the music started off as a functional music. It was played on social occasions, for dancing, in bars, at rent parties and in New Orleans for parades, funerals and picnics. It could be understood as an urban folk music, a community music. In fact the split between art and entertainment was irrelevant at this stage. It only became problematical in the 1920s when jazz gained a national popularity in America, and hence access to a commodity market. For then the question became not art or entertainment but entertainment for whom. In other words entertainment to fulfill the emotional needs of a particular community or entertainment to sell to anyone in the market place. It is sometimes assumed by people involved in commercial music that all musicians would like to be commercially successful so long as they didn't have to change their music. But in fact there is evidence that very early on musicians were aware of how the social meaning of their music would change if made into a mass commodity. Freddie Keppard, a Black trumpet player who was active in New Orleans in the 1910s was said to have refused the opportunity to make the first jazz record for this very reason.

There were also, however, plenty of musicians who were willing to tailor their music to the requirements of the market place.

One way of doing this was to try and make jazz respectable by taking it into the concert hall and surrounding the improvisation with pretentious compositions. This in fact was the dominant public face of the music in the 20s and 30s. It was Paul Whiteman (a white man) who was labelled the 'king of jazz' and his music was definitely of this type. The true jazz side of the tradition was played largely for the musicians' own pleasure at after hours jam sessions which cut out all the trimmings and focussed on the actual improvisation. But at this stage it was the commercialised side of the music represented by Whiteman and others that aspired to the title of art. This was of course on the basis of it trying to conform to European ideas about refinement and composition. It was not until later, particularly as European afficionados began to write books on jazz that it became clear that in fact, in the way it was produced the music at jam sessions was a more original and expressive form than the over-formalised big bands. Sure enough the latter had some of the superficial qualities of art - basically in their scale, the bands were large and many of the pieces were long - but it was the jam session improvisation that had the truth, the quality of sincere personal commitment, that was able to take the art of performance to a higher level. Indeed it was normal for the big bands to include one or two 'hot' soloists to maintain the interest in their music, by improvising.

These two strands have continued in the music up to the present day in various transformations and both strands are often considered art. Certainly by the time of the bebop revolution of the 1940s, the improvisors themselves considered that what they were doing was art and were adamant in asserting that their music was for listening to, not for dancing or background noise.

However, the music as a whole is still caught between the two stools of art and entertainment. It is a common claim that jazz is 'an art music forced to behave like a pop music'. There is also still the third factor pulling on it - the desire to make

a community music for Black people, the memory of jazz as an urban folk music.

The complexity of the situation is illustrated by the cases of Cecil Taylor and Archie Shepp, both of whom were part of the avant-garde of the music that came to prominence in the early 60s. (They were also both in the Jazz Composers' Guild). Cecil Taylor was written about frequently in the 60s as the misunderstood genius starving in his attic somewhere and thus gained a certain notoreity rather than popularity. [1] Taylor is a man who is enraged at the idea of responding to the wishes of the market or representatives of the market. For instance in 1965 he rejected the offer of regular solo appearances at the Village Vanguard in New York because at the time he was concerned principally with his group music. In the last five years or so he has been making solo appearances at festivals but feels this aspect of his music has been overplayed:

> But it also means that they don't understand, don't want to understand, that I have a unit of musicians who are responsible for the piano sounds that I've been making. I have been quite deliberately organising the material that I've been playing for many years and it's quite specific that there's a music, a language, there in which the piano is just a voice, an instrument which is part of the unit. Solo piano has been seen as a more saleable commodity than the larger unit, and market considerations rather than my wishes have emphasized this area of the music. In some respects it's a form of repression.
>
> Interview in Black Music and Jazz Review, May 1979.

The content of the music however is not compromised at all by Taylor who has developed his music consistently and since he now earns several thousand dollars for a solo performance one must

1. See, for example, Spellman, Black Music: Four Lives, and Wilmer, Jazz People.

read his claims about repression a little ironically. (The Wilfrid Mellers' remark about the complexity of Taylor's group music should also be borne in mind).

Archie Shepp was also considered an uncompromising sincere artist, committed to innovation, but in the last few years traditional elements have become far more predominant in his work and he justifies this in terms of personal communication. However, it can also be seen as an abdication of the role of artist and it is difficult to say whether the relationship he has replaced this with is with the Black community or with the market place.

> One night in the early 70s I was riding in Philadelphia with a friend of my mother's, Auntie Bobbie. She told me she had my record from the Donaueschigen Festival. "I'm trying to listen to it but tell me Archie, when are you going to make something that I can like?" I told her I'd try to do that on the next record so when we did Attica Blues, I tried to reach more people. What she had said to me indicated that she had done as much as she could and it was up to me to take the next step. I felt a need in myself to develop a musical approach that could at least prepare some meeting ground between people who make music and people who listen to music because the music we were playing in the 60s had run its course in terms of audience.
>
> Interview in Down Beat, December 21, 1978.

Jazz in America exists very much in a market situation and it is this as well as the actual attitudes of musicians that causes it to change. It is not easy for jazz musicians to shelter in the academy in the way that straight composers can and thus ignore market considerations. In the isolated cases where it has been possible, it hasn't felt right, it takes the music too far away from the traditional way it's made. The major change in the market place that has formed the context of Shepp's development (and there are many similar cases) has been

from the late 60s when jazz was almost totally pushed out of the market place by white rock music and the late 70s when a much more diverse situation existed with traditional forms of jazz forming a substantial part of the market place.

Taylor's case is quite different of course, for here art and the market place come together. He has actually managed to make art and himself as an artist into a highly saleable commodity.

v) The Gramophone

I have talked about three possible ways in which a jazz musician may conceive of his creative activity within his society. I suggested he could think of himself as an artist producing something that society ought to be interested in, or he could think of himself as fulfilling a social role in providing the cultural needs of a community, or he could think of himself as making something to sell in the market place. The mediating factor in these relationships and the one that makes jazz an especially interesting case in the field of all world culture is the gramophone and the gramophone record.

The history of jazz would be inconceivable without records.

Records are now so dominant in our listening experience that it is easy to take them for granted as the basis of music making, but this is certainly not the case in any but the most commercial of musics. In a sense the importance of the record in jazz is contradictory. For in terms of the performing musician they are relatively insignificant, they represent just one performance in a long string of performances, and being recorded without an audience present (usually) they are something of an abstraction from the music. But in terms of jazz becoming an art form that could be practised as well as consumed at an international level and in terms of jazz becoming a commercial industry records were crucial.

For the first time, it meant that a music that was based on performance and not on printed notation could spread freely around the world. Jazz wasn't the first music to have a tradition that was international, European classical music had this distinction. But because of the nature of the latter's transmission through the printed score, which requires a high level of education to understand, it inevitably remained academic and exclusive.

Classical music didn't rely solely on the score for its transmission, it was also dependent on details of interpretation which weren't in the notation (often referred to as 'feeling'). and these could only be learnt by close contact with competent performers. Hence the bias towards the academy as a centre for musical production.

The alternative to this, music which relied on performance and aural traditions, that is to say all traditional folk music, was able to develop a tradition only at a local community level, limited by the movements of travelling musicians and the ability of listeners and musicians to absorb new developments at one, or at the most several hearings.

The sociologist Max Weber drew attention to this:

> Only the elevation of many-voiced music under notational art created the composer proper and guaranteed the polyphonic creations of the Western world, in contrast to those of all other peoples, permanence, aftereffect and continuing development.

Max Weber, The Rational and Social Foundations of Music, p.88.

Weber undoubtedly exaggerated the contrast, since to claim that music without notation could have no "permanence, aftereffect and continuing development" was far too narrow an interpretation of oral/aural traditions. It would have been more appropriate to discuss the relative scales and rates of development of the literate and oral/aural traditions.

In any case, all this has been changed by the widespread use of the aural notation systems of the gramophone and tape recorder, and the aural mass communication systems of radio (and later television). These were essentially democratising forces in musical education. It was now possible for anyone in the capitalist world to engage directly in an international culture.

Specifically, for our purposes, this meant that musicians in Europe could learn to play jazz without ever travelling to America, without even attending a live jazz performance, and certainly without a formal music education or basic musical literacy. The method was simple. Buy a Louis Armstrong record. Play it again and again. Buy a trumpet. Play along with Louis until you sound like him - personal tuition from a distance of 4000 miles.

There are countless examples, American as well as European, of musicians learning how to improvise in this way. A well-known one is the white Chicago clarinettist Mezz Mezzrow who describes in his book Really the Blues how in the 1920s he and his friends would play along with records by New Orleans musicians. Innumerable saxophone players have copied the recorded solos of Lester Young and Charlie Parker.

This revolution in musical education has led some musicians to suggest that the score is now totally obsolete as a method for creating music. [1] But it has also made it necessary to develop a radically different basis for explaining music. At present musicologists and sociologists are able to explain, for example, European classical music by reference to its social and psychological function. That is, the social event in which it occurred (for instance a public concert or a court function) and its emotional content (how it represented a particular response to the world). [2] Alternatively in the case of ethnic musics, they are able to show how the actual participation of members of a community makes the music a reflection of social relationships outside the specific music making situation which thus simultaneously both builds and expresses a social solidarity within the community. [3]

1. See, for example, Evan Parker, quoted on p.234 of this thesis, and Trevor Wishart, Musical Writing, Musical Speaking.
2. See, for example, Finkelstein's discussion of Beethoven in How Music Expresses Ideas and the work of Meyer and Mellers.
3. See, for example, Blacking's discussion of Venda music in How Musical Is Man? and Chapter 2 of this thesis.

In the case of jazz, neither of these methods is sufficient. The fact that it is an international oral/aural music effectively means that it is available to everyone as a means of expression. In a very real sense, anyone can do it. It is no longer tied to a particular culture. Thus, as Leroi Jones showed in his comparison of Louis Armstrong and Bix Beiderbecke, jazz allows for a variety of different stances, and it is wrong to regard it as a simple expression of a particular class or ethnic group. Although the mainstream of the music still remains Black American, even when viewed from within the USA, it is clearly a world music both in terms of listeners and musicians. Of the 1408 musicians listed in Leonard Feather's Encyclopaedia of Jazz in the 70s, 287 give their birthplace as being outside America.

The fact that the music is there on a record, available as a commodity, means that its meaning too is transferable. It can be used for very different social purposes from those for which the music was originally made. It is in this sense that the gramophone record is an alienated form of the music. The music goes out of the control of those who made it (musicians and local audience) and is changed into something else.

This can happen in many different ways and they aren't necessarily disadvantageous to the musicians. An early example is that jazz was studied and analysed seriously as an art form much earlier in Europe than in America. This surely must be connected with the fact that it's very difficult to tell the difference between a round piece of plastic that's an art and one that isn't. It was easy to base a judgement on the music rather than its social setting. An amusing corollary of this is that some European writers have been severely shocked when they have finally visited America and have come into direct contact with the musicians' lives. Andre Hodeir is perhaps an extreme case:

> I spent the early months of 1957 in the jazz milieus of New York, working with the musicians and trying to share their fascinating eccentric lives. Had I been able to adjust myself to that strange world, had I not rejected the communion of narcotics, had I been able to rid myself of my cultural background, everything would have been so simple: I could have become the authorised spokesman for one of the most remarkable groups of contemporary artists. But I could not and would not take that irreversible plunge. I floated about on the surface, contemplating those incomprehensible creatures who would occasionally emerge from the depths to wave or even beckon to me. I was able to communicate with John Lewis because, even when our opinions differed, our cultural backgrounds brought us together; Monk's thought processes, however, remained a closed book for me, and had our musical affinities not given me a sudden, intuitive grasp of his universe, I might well have passed him up altogether.
>
> Andre Hodeir, Toward Jazz, pp.8-9.

In the 1930s and 40s then, the commodity form of the music allowed it to become regarded as an art.

Another way in which the commodity form of the music allowed its meaning to be transformed was in the 1950s when it became a commercial pop music in England as the so-called 'trad revival' gained mass popularity. English copies of the New Orleans jazz of the 1920s sold in their millions, and at the same time many listeners made a progression from listening to the copies to the original versions. And of course they were untroubled about whether it was art or not. A similar process happened with the skiffle bands of people like Lonnie Donegan arousing interest in the Black blues singers that they copied (in Donegan's case it was Leadbelly). This aspect of records is particularly relevant to the history of English jazz and I will develop it more in the introduction to the English section.

The other very important factor about records is that both the minority and mass interest records are very sensitive to the

rise and fall of the economy as a whole and this has sometimes affected the musical development of jazz, as for example the recording boom of the 1920s and the recording ban imposed by the musicians' union in the early 1940s.

In the early years of jazz record companies in general assumed that Black music would be of no interest to the record buying public and consequently few were made. However, in the boom years of the 1920s even many Blacks had money available for buying records, so most companies brought out what they called 'Race' records which were blues and jazz recorded specifically for the Black market. In fact, during the 1920s 'Race' records were only one example of music recorded for specific ethnic groups. Many were also made for European immigrants to the States of Hungarian, Russian and French music and later on Puerto Rican and Cuban music, but it was only jazz that caught on on a mass scale. In the depression the recording of 'Race' records slowed down to a trickle and many companies dropped them altogether.

In the early 1940s the American Federation of Musicians made a recording ban and Leroi Jones has blamed this for the lack of public understanding of bebop which was just developing through these years. Similarly there is a large hole in the recording of the American jazz avant-garde in the late 1960s because all the record companies turned their attention to making as much money as they could out of rock music.

Summing up then we may say that records did two things. Firstly, they enabled jazz to expand to become a music that was both made and listened to all over the capitalist world, and beyond. It was thus able to be conceived of as an art and was gradually able to develop an economically viable avant-garde which was supported by a thinly spread audience around the world.

Secondly, records provided a potential mass market by their commodity form. At the same time they made the musical development particularly sensitive to fluctuations in the commerical music market and in the economy as a whole.

One response that this situation has prompted in musicians is for them to form their own record companies committed to riding out any fluctuations in the market place. An early attempt at this was made in the 50s by Charlie Mingus, and Sun Ra has run 'Saturn Records' from the late 50s to the present, but it was not really until the 70s that many more musicians did this. In a way it was necessary for them to rid themselves of the idea of records making them rich and famous before they could do it. Apart from a few exceptions like Paul Bley's 'Improvising Artist Incorporated' the musician-run companies have been run very much as alternative organisations. Their budgets are small and they are unlikely to spend much on promotion. But within these limits, providing the costs are kept low, they have discovered that even on runs as short as 500 or 1000 it is possible to survive and make a small profit. The subject of record companies and the avant-garde is covered well in Valerie Wilmer's book, As Serious As Your Life, and will also be returned to later in this thesis.

But the process of making a record, as well as being relatively insignificant for an improvisor, may actually be contradictory, for a record is often listened to as though it were a finished article rather than being part of an ongoing process. Derek Bailey was aware of this when he wrote the sleeve note for his first solo record in 1971:

> Making a record is a very anomalous action for somebody interested in improvisation as I am.... There are two reasons which perhaps justify it - it is a sort of example of what you're up to, and maybe it facilitates getting a few gigs.... As long as it is fairly representative of what you're concerned with, whether it is a strikingly successful improvisation or not doesn't seem to me that important.
>
> Derek Bailey, sleevenote to Incus 2.

Elsewhere he has justified making records as a means of documenting a player's development.

Whatever the musical contradictions of recording improvisation and fixing a moment might be, the fact remains that for a musician who wishes to be acknowledged as part of an ongoing development it is essential to do it. For this is the only way that he will become widely enough known and hence get enough gigs to survive. It is equally important for the more commercial jazzmen because record sales form the basis of their income.

By contrast, for the community oriented musicians with no particular artistic or commercial aspirations, records will not be important. For them the music is about the gig and the social occasion, so the mediation of records would be superfluous.

CHAPTER 2: WRITING, MEANING, MUSIC

i) Writing About Music

What expectations should the reader have of the present work? I raise this question now rather than at the beginning because Chapter one provides some useful references to make the discussion more concrete and specific. However, I will start off with some general points about writing about music.

The first point to be made is an obvious one. Writing about music is, by its very nature, an activity that is derivative and secondary to the primary fact of the music. Thus it is impossible for writing to reproduce the experience that music produces. If this is not understood it may lead to disappointment when reading a book about music. But, of course this is not just true of writing about music, it is true of the relationship between any two mediums of expression. For example, writing about painting, painting about music, a film of a book, or indeed writing about writing. This might seem at first to place a limitation on writing about music, but translation between mediums is not my aim. The corollary of the impossibility of translation between mediums is that every medium has its own limits and this suggests the possibility of going beyond these limits by using another medium. There is nothing new about this. For example, composers often present a new work with an accompanying programme note. Also, within music itself the song, which joins a verbal message to a musical one, is probably the commonest form of all.

All cultural expressions, then, leave something unsaid. Exactly what is unsaid will vary according to both the cultural expression itself and the cultural context in which it is experienced. If the cultural context in which the expression is received is different from that in which it is made, it is likely that this something that is unsaid will be greater. Hence, in the modern world, with increasingly wide dissemination

of cultural products of all kinds, writing about culture becomes more and more important. Thus I consider the most important function that writing about music can serve is clarifying the nature and significance of the context of the music.

This has explained very briefly what I consider to be the status of writing about music. It should add to the experience of music rather than try to duplicate it. I will expand on my own intentions in writing this work later on in this chapter but before that it is necessary to consider one more point about musical writing and one point about jazz writing.

Musical writing is often limited by the nature of the verbal language we have at our disposal. Compared to the language used for talking about painting or drama, for example, the language of musical writing is very much a specialist language. Painting can be described in everyday language. Colours and shapes can be named, subjects can be recognised and named. Even abstract paintings are relatively easy to describe. The same applies to drama. Dialogue between actors on a stage is so closely related to real life conversation that it is rarely seen as a problem to describe it. By contrast, to describe music, traditional or contemporary, we have to resort to terms that few people understand. Apoggiatura, sonata form, anacrusis, serial, cluster, false relation, tone row, neapolitan sixth, riff, break, blue note, backbeat, paradiddle. There is also an everyday language for describing music, but this has been borrowed from visual and other experiential languages and is notoriously inexact. We talk of a broad sound, of tone colours, of an angular melody, a smooth melody, square rhythm, rigid form and so on. Sometimes we even borrow technical terms from painting such as pointilliste.

The result of this is that musical writing is often pulled between the two poles of analogy and technicality. Writing accurately for the general reader is not easy. However, it is

my contention that music is not intrinsically harder to write about than painting or poetry, but that because of this language problem it has been harder to build up a substantial body of literature that can be absorbed into the mainstream of writing about culture. I am suggesting that this difficulty is a historically specific one arising from the particular historical relationship between verbal and musical language in our culture rather than from any a priori contradictions. Thus, in the western categories of thought, deriving very much from the 19th century concept of the romantic artist, it is often assumed that music is a 'pure' language of un-nameable emotions, coming from the heart and transcending the analysis of rational thought. However, in recent years, this assumption has been progressively questioned and I consider my work as being part of this process.

Language is a problem in writing about any sort of music. Writing about jazz and improvised music has a further problem associated with it which is also historically specific: jazz originated as the culture of a repressed minority and is still very much a subculture or counterculture having an uneasy relationship to the dominant culture. Although there is now a large body of serious literature about jazz and improvised music, and easy access to the music itself, it is still not considered an area which the self-respecting educated person ought to know something about. One is unable to assume a basic knowledge of the music in the way one might for European classical music. Thus there is always a pressure felt to provide school text-book information for the general reader at the risk of becoming boring or patronising to the more knowledgeable reader. I would imagine there have already been some passages in Chapter one which are more or less unfathomable for some readers. For example, on page 29 I included a quote which referred to "Parker-like complexity". If I now point out that the alto saxophonist Charlie Parker was probably as significant to the history of jazz as were Schoenberg and Stravinsky to the history of straight music or Cezanne to the history of European oil painting it may become clear why I am a little reluctant to

provide too many explanatory footnotes. As much as possible I have left the reader to infer the significance of names from the context in which they occur. Thus in this example the information that Parker was a genius who played very complex lines in some period before the 1960s would just be sufficient to follow the argument. However, for general readers to feel comfortable with it a footnote such as the following would be required:

> Charlie Parker was an alto saxophinist active in New York in the 1940s and 50s who was the leading figure in the bebop revolution in jazz. This was the first period in jazz when it was acknowledged that the music was primarily for listening to rather than for dancing. The musicians thus started being considered as artists rather than entertainers, which was a significant development for Black Americans as well as for jazz. Bebop developed partly as a reaction to the commercialization of the swing music of the 1930s, using much more complex forms of rhythm and harmony. There was a great emphasis on virtuosity of instrumental technique and spontaneity of improvisation. Parker's nickname was 'Bird' and in comparison to earlier jazz his solos really did seem to fly.

I have included a few explanatory footnotes, but I hope the interested readers will be moved to look (and listen) elsewhere for general information about the history of jazz.[1]

The fact that jazz is a subculture in some way opposed to the dominant culture also means that a piece of academic writing about jazz is in a curiously ambiguous position as a form of mediation between the two cultures. Jazz, as we have seen, is

1. Possible starting points are the following books: J. Berendt, The Jazz Book, J.L. Collier, The Making of Jazz. The best way to gain an aural impression of jazz history is to select at random from the jazz collection at a record library.

an oral/aural culture in comparison to straight music which is largely literate and academic. Thus 'jazz people' are likely to see a thesis about jazz as an unnecessary intellectualisation of a form of music whose strengths lie elsewhere. They may feel that people who don't have a natural feeling for the music will never attain an understanding of it through having it explained to them. Whether this is true or not, writing academically about jazz might on the one hand be interpreted as an attempt by the dominant culture to incorporate the music and appropriate it for its own use. On the other hand it might be seen as a way of broadening the knowledge and understanding of the music in a way which, although irrelevant to its immediate existence, might prove beneficial for its future survival. Needless to say, my intention is the latter.

This work, then, is a mediation between the two cultures, but it addresses itself to both sides.

ii) Meanings, Social Meanings of Cultural Products, Jazz and Improvised Music

Right at the beginning I said I was going to write about the social meaning of jazz and improvised music. I use the term 'social meaning' in a broad inclusive way and a preliminary discussion is necessary here to avoid confusion later on. What does 'mean' mean?

One thinks immediately of the meaning of a word. The shapes, r, e, d mean, to people who understand English, particular sounds. Put together, either the shapes or the sounds mean a particular range of colours that exist in the real world. That is to say a range that includes . In this sense mean is used as a direct reference to the world.

There is another sense in which we can ask what (red) means. On traffic lights red means stop; seen in the air at night red means the top of a high object to be avoided by aeroplanes; more generally red means danger. In other words red is used in specific social situations to convey specific information.

But as well as the intended meaning which red conveys directly, it also implies a much wider sort of information in each specific context. For example, a red light on the road surface at night means danger, but it also means that there are probably road works in progress, it means that someone has put the light there and lit it at dusk, it means that in this society people mend roads and that it takes longer than a day, it means that the road-menders are concerned that their work shouldn't cause accidents and so on.

In these cases mean is used as a way of making inferences from a particular observation of the world. Inferences both about human intentions and about the particular actions and social

and cultural relationships which enabled these intentions to be expressed through the colour red. Although these meanings might seem insignificant this will actually depend on who the observer is. For a driver, 'red means danger' will be the most important meaning, in fact the only important meaning. For a hypothetical observer from another distant society the inferences he could make from the red light about how our society works would be more important.

In all these cases meaning has been attributed to human actions. The intended meaning has been strictly functional. The road-menders have used a specific socially understood language to convey a simple but important message. It is irrelevant to them that by using this language they also convey wider meanings about how the language is used, and hence about their society.

But it is not just human actions that have meaning in this sense. The natural world can also signify things in various different ways. Red sky at night shepherd's delight. In our culture a red sky in the evening means good weather the following day (possibly a logical connection, possibly a superstitious one). People other than shepherds might be delighted by a red sky because of its natural beauty, and this is another sort of meaning.

As well as being beautiful or forecasting the weather, objects in the natural world can also be personified and used as symbols for specific human feelings. A seagull circling high in the sky and calling might be taken to mean freedom or to mean loneliness - that is: "If I were able to fly around so effortlessly I would be free", or "If I were that distance away from social life I would feel lonely".

But all these meanings signified by the natural world are culturally specific too. They derive from a language which has been socially constructed.by a society in the context of wanting to understand its sensual experience of the natural world.

Whether they are actually noticed by an observer or not and the precise nuances of their meaning will depend on his or her personal history and present preoccupations, but the basic meanings are social.

I use these examples from the everyday world because the same dimensions of meaning are present in the world of music, as indeed they are in other cultural products such as paintings, poems, plays and so on. There is the same range in the scale of meanings that can be expressed. Just as the meaning of red ranges from the very general 'red means danger' to the detailed and particular meaning in each specific context, so music can express meanings at scales ranging from a whole musical tradition, through a period in that tradition, through a particular piece, to a single sound within a piece. There is the same coexistence of humanly produced meaning and natural meaning (the beauty of musical sound). There is also the same scope for meanings to be latent or active - that is to be intended but not understood or to be understood but not intended or to be both intended and understood. This will be largely determined by the context.

The main distinction to be drawn between the meaning of cultural products and the meaning of the everyday world is at the level of the producer's intention. For in contrast to the precisely limited meaning intended by the roadmender with his red light which has a simple function in a specific context, the musician or painter or poet intends a meaning that is both <u>in</u> a context and <u>about</u> a context. That is, the language they use refers not only to the world, but also to itself. Thus the way the expressive form is manipulated in itself signifies a meaning without referring directly to the concrete world of objects. Often this sort of meaning is called 'aesthetic meaning' and the objects that express it 'art'. However, since 'aesthetic' and 'art' are so closely associated with 'Beauty'

and are so often used as a way of defining meanings that are seen as specifically distinct from social meanings, I will not use the terms. Indeed it would be contradictory for me to do so because I believe that the idea that 'Beauty' can exist independently of context is mistaken, and thus I intend to argue that the meanings expressed through the manipulations of the forms of cultural products are fundamentally social in several strong senses of the word. (I say 'strong' to distinguish them from the weaker sense in which all meanings are social since they depend on a socially constructed language to be understood). This aspect of meaning is crucial to the existence of cultural products. While it is possible that some observers could understand a meaning from the manipulations of form expressed through red road lights, this would be unintended by the producers and without it the lights would still serve their purpose. In the case of cultural products the whole point of producing them is to express these sorts of meanings and if they are not understood the cultural product becomes meaningless.

The degree to which a cultural product is understood, the way it is 'read', or the way some of its meanings become active while others remain latent, is not entirely in the hands of the producer. The producer makes the cultural product in a specific social context. It uses a language that is understood within that context to say a specific thing. The 'reader' from within the context can consciously understand this specific thing and at the same time unconsciously has his cultural assumptions confirmed by the way they are embodied in the cultural product. The 'reader' from outside the context - either from a different social group or from a different historical period - can only fully understand the cultural product if he understands the context in which it was made. This will become clearer if we look at an example.

In Chapter five of Ways of Seeing John Berger examines the meanings expressed by the European oil painting tradition between 1500 and 1900. He argues that the specific ways that the

painters developed the manipulation of forms through using oil paint on canvas were expressive of the desire of their patrons to display their possessions.

> What distinguishes oil painting from any other form of painting is its special ability to render the tangibility, the texture, the lustre, the solidity of what it depicts. It defines the real as that which you can put your hands on.
>
> J. Berger, Ways of Seeing, p.88.

He analyses this by looking at a painting from the beginning of the tradition, The Ambassadors by Holbein (1533):

> It is painted with great skill to create the illusion in the spectator that he is looking at real objects and materials... The sense of touch (is) like a restricted static sense of sight. Every square inch of the surface of this painting, whilst remaining purely visual,

> appeals to, importunes, the sense of touch. The eye moves from fur to silk to metal to wood to velvet to marble to paper to felt, and each time what the eye sees is already translated, within the painting itself into the language of tactile sensation. The two men have a certain presence and there are many objects which symbolise ideas, but it is the materials, the stuff, by which the men are surrounded and clothed which dominate the painting.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> Oil painting celebrated a new kind of wealth - which was dynamic and which found its only sanction in the supreme buying power of money. Thus painting itself had to be able to demonstrate the desirability of what money could buy. And the visual desirability of what can be bought lies in its tangibility, in how it will reward the touch, the hand, of the owner.
>
> ibid. p.90.

Thus, looking from the outside, Berger is able to explain the specific relationship between the art form and its original purpose. To the painter and his patrons this relationship would be relatively implicit: oil painting and its forms would simply seem the best way of painting. But for an outsider the relationship must be made explicit or the painting will seem vacuous. And the vacuity would then be filled by meanings which derive from the painting's value as an object in itself rather than as representing objects in a special way. By this I mean its value as a commodity in the art market place as a historical treasure invoking "a whole series of learnt assumptions about art. Assumptions concerning: Beauty, Truth, Genius, Civilization, Form, Status, Taste, etc." (ibid., p.11). If the original contextual relationship is made explicit for us by an art historian such as Berger we can then see how the painting actually expresses this relationship.

In this particular painting, the objects depicted represent symbolically possessions far outside the visual scope of the

painting. Berger suggests that the globe and navigational instruments symbolize the colonization of the world.

> This was the time when the ocean trade routes were being opened up for the slave trade and for the traffic which was to siphon the riches from other continents into Europe, and later supply the capital for the take-off of the Industrial Revolution... Beside the globe are a book of arithmetic, a hymn book and a lute. To colonize a land it was necessary to convert its people to Christianity and accounting, and thus to prove to them that European civilization was the most advanced in the world. Its art included.
>
> ibid. p.95.

The meaning described here by Berger doesn't actually transcend the meaning intended by the painter, rather it adopts a historical viewpoint and shows how a meaning expressed within a culture for itself through a cultural product can become a meaning about the culture when seen from outside.

But what are the specific social meanings that can be expressed by music? Indeed, is it possible for music to express meanings anything like the ones described for paintings?

I will start by giving specific examples of two very contrasting general ways that music can express social meanings. Following these I will turn to the particular social meanings that are the concern of this thesis - that is, those associated with jazz and improvised music.

Music doesn't portray the world directly in the way that figurative painting does (except in the words of songs). But it does (at least in the west) produce emotional states in the

listener by the way it uses the language of tonality and rhythm to produce aural patterns of tension and release. The problem in describing this is that of objectifying the emotions, and reducing them to their general features, but some writers have found ways of approaching this problem. The composer and musicologist Deryck Cooke, for example, examines the musical phrases that are used to accompany certain verbal phrases in European opera. Starting from the assumption that there is likely to be some correspondence between the meaning of words and music in opera, he is able to show that particular shapes of melody do tend to have particular meanings. He produces what is effectively a catalogue of melodic shapes as they are used in European orchestral music as well as opera and gives a specific emotional meaning to each one. I have chosen an example at random, (the numbers refer to degrees of the scale):

1-(2)-(3)-(4)-5-6-5 (MAJOR)

> The ascending major 1-3-5 progression, with the 5-6-5 phrase dovetailed on, is another of the most widely used terms of musical language; it is almost always employed to express the innonence and purity of angels and children, or some natural phenomenon which possesses the same qualities in the eyes of men. That this should be so is hardly surprising, when we consider that the phrase confines itself entirely to the joyful elements of the scale, and being an ascending one, it is consequently an affirmation of absolute joy. It is, in fact, expressive of an absolute happiness that can never be fully experienced in civilized human life but only by savages, children, animals, or birds, or saints or imaginary blessed beings...

Deryck Cooke, The Language of Music, p.153.

This is a very definite interpretation of what, taken out of context, seems to me to be an innocuous enough melodic phrase. But maybe this is the point; I am not immersed in the context of this sort of music as Cooke is, and he provides 25 examples of its specific use to provide strong circumstantial evidence to support his case. Alongside this he considers 15 other

basic melodic shapes and then uses his interpretations of these as a basis for showing how composers build up a large scale piece of music as a coherent flow of musical expressions.

Thus Cooke provides a method for understanding musical meanings at the level of detail and the individual piece within the European classical tradition. While it would certainly be possible to argue with him over his detailed interpretations, I think he clearly establishes the general principle that in this particular tradition melodic patterns do express this sort of meaning.

In extreme contrast to this, the ethnomusicologist Alan Lomax has ignored the interpretations of details within a tradition and has concentrated on whole musical styles, and their relationships to social structure. He does this by crosscultural comparisons. Through his 'cantometrics project' he has devised a complicated method of classifying folk songs from all over the world, and has sought to discover whether particular elements of musical language are associated with particular societal forms. His first published work on the subject appeared in 1959 and he made the following far-reaching conclusion:

> In these societies considered, the sexual code, the position of women, and the treatment of children seem to be the social patterns most clearly linked with musical style. Where women are made into chattels, as they have been during recent history in most areas of high culture, their feelings of melancholy and frustration have determined that the entire music of the various societies take on a nostalgic or agonized character, in singing style, melodic type, and emotional content.
>
> A. Lomax, Folk Song Style, p.950.

This conclusion was based on a detailed study of vocal styles

in Italy and Spain which shows convincingly that within each country the styles vary in a very close relationship with sexual oppression.

By the time Lomax wrote his textbook on cantometrics, Folk Song Style and Culture, in 1968, he had produced a statistical analysis to support the applicability of this conclusion to a much wider range of societies, and had also produced various correlations with other aspects of social structure.

His analysis is at the level of styles of singing rather than particular songs. If, in general, societies where women are very oppressed find songs acceptable only if they are "nostalgic and agonized" (high-pitched nasal vocal tone used by men and women) then it seems reasonable to assume that this sort of style can be used for expressing the oppression of women. Lomax suggests that the reason for this cross-cultural significance is at least partly connected with the physical way in which this sort of sound is produced. That is, using a very tense and constricted throat and throwing the head back in a similar way to crying or wailing. The argument assumes that particular physical sensations are associated at a biological rather than social level with particular emotions. Thus a song or singing style which can only be produced by using these physical sensations will express the social experience which is associated with these emotions by producing a feeling of empathy in the listener.

In the very contrasting analyses of Cooke and Lomax we can now see how musical language at its two extremes of scale, that is the smallest detail within a piece and a whole musical style, can express emotions and how these emotions can be related to social structure and thus express social meanings. We can deduce too that if this sort of analysis were carried through to every aspect of a piece and the musical style in which it

exists then the meaning that was expressed would amount to a coherent world view. The style is expressing what it feels like living in that social and cultural world (Lomax's explanation of how it does it suggests that this works on a very deep level) and the manipulation of the details says something about actual or possible ways of experiencing it. Thus we can say that music embodies a world view in a way similar to the one described by John Berger for paintings. The reader should not be surprised by this proposition, because the meanings that I have described are ones that are very widely felt in music but have been difficult to explain.

We must now direct our attention more explicitly to the social meanings which are the concern of this thesis. In what way can we say that jazz and improvised music as they were described in Chapter one embody a world view?

Significantly, it is a sociologist and a musician writing together who provide us with the basis for answering this question. In Some Observations on the Social Stratification of 20th Century Music, Phil Virden and Trevor Wishart start from the passage by Chester which I quoted in Chapter one (page 22). They argue that the two models which Chester describes, that is intensional and extensional development, are closely related to the musical preferences of particular classes.

> We are arguing that the symbolic modes of the ruling elements tends to explicitness (extensional development) and those of the dispossessed to implicitness (intensional development). In music the explicits may be laid bare by the translation of soundflows into visual marks, the score, or vice verse. The emphasis upon the implicit - that which cannot be exactly translated - is favoured by those who live, in a more or less beseiged manner, in a close communality which divorces itself from the values of the prevailing culture.

Virden and Wishart, p.163.

Within the Western capitalist world Black Americans have been one of the most dispossessed of all, and thus Virden and Wishart argue that the blues represents an extreme of intensionality (the traditional blues being Black music for Blacks, in comparison to jazz which is Black music for whites and Blacks). They take this as being the reason for the increasing influence of Black music on Western popular music.

> Furthermore the explosion of Afro-American and Afro-American influenced musics during this century may be seen as strongly related to changes and developments in social relations. The electrification of communication, through recording and broadcasting devices, has brought the whole of the industrial world face-to-face in sound. Sounds competed in the market and, despite the opposition of the dominant culture, the music of those within the culture but not of it, the blacks, found resonance with the experience of others who felt alienated from the established order. The black basis of today's 'popular' music is the musical expression of a generation in conflict with the values of its elders.
>
> ibid. p.164.

Thus Virden and Wishart are arguing that the use of intensional development bears a structural relationship to social structures generally found amongst the dispossessed and hence is able to express their opposition to the ruling class. In other words, it is not just that they form a separate community and have thus developed a separate music, it is the very nature of this music which expresses an oppositional attitude.

It follows from this, in Virden and Wishart's argument, that intensional development may be borrowed from the dispossessed and used as an expressive medium by any other social group which either wants to express opposition to the ruling class or simply wants to "divorce itself from the values of the prevailing culture". In the modern world, then, intensional development does not have to be associated with the dispossessed. Rather

it indicates a particular attitude to the established order - that of alienation and opposition.

(The argument is strengthened rather than weakened by the fact that some members of the straight music avant-garde favour the use of intensional development. For they too may wish to express an oppositional attitude).

Apart from citing historical and contemporary examples of the use of intensional development, Virden and Wishart's argument progresses by making an analogy with speech. The dispossessed, they argue, also favour implicit modes of speech, (they refer to Basil Bernstein's distinction between 'restricted code' and 'elaborated code' [1]) and this in its turn relates to the sorts of problem they have to deal with in daily life.

> Most workers tend to be dissatisfied with their work, and have adapted to an incomprehensible and massively unmoveable physical and human world (including their own 'human nature'). They also tend to be concerned with immediate material interests, to abide by the mandate of external authority, and to seek security in communal strength rather than individual assertion. Their orientation matches a realistic appraisal of their place in the social order...
>
> Systematically different problems in daily life generate systematically different ways of articulating and dealing with the problems. According to Bernstein, working class role relations favour a communication code emphasising verbally the communal rather than the individual, the concrete rather than the abstract, surfaces rather than processes, immediate behaviour rather than intentions, statuses rather than individual personalities.
>
> ibid. p.158.

1. see Basil Bernstein, 'A Sociolinguistic Approach to Socialisation' in Class, Codes and Control, Vol 2.

Possibly, there is too much emphasis on passivity in this description of working class attitudes. Working class speech comes across here as being a crude instrument just adequate for coping with the day to day problems of life. One gains the impression that working class people wouldn't speak at all if they could help it! But this is because of the high level of generality employed by Virden and Wishart, and also because they are forced by their own context to describe the 'restricted code' in terms of the 'elaborated code'. They are aware of this problem and it shows once again that if one expressive mode is described in the terms of another, it is likely to appear as inadequate.

Jazz and improvised music aren't purely 'intensional' in the way that some forms of blues are, but as I said in Chapter one, 'intensionality' is a very important element in its meaning. I think we can see from Virden and Wishart's arguments the nature of the social meaning of this intensionality and how it forms an element of the world view expressed by the music. Also we can see how the different degree of intensionality in jazz and improvised music of different sorts could express its changing relationship to the dominant culture.

The second area of social meanings expressed by music comprises meanings which are the result of the social way in which the music is produced. Music usually depends very directly on social relationships for its production. Sometimes there is a composer and a group of performers, sometimes just a group of creative performers. There must also be a social event in which the musical performance takes place and which brings together either musicians and audience or, in cases when there is no special audience, creative participants. This is something that is often forgotten in straight music, because it is normally assumed that the purpose of a musical event is for the composer to express himself through the medium of the performing musicians

to the audience. Thus the complex hierarchical structure that is necessary for the production of straight music is taken as given and not as part of the meaning of the music. However, when straight music is placed in the context of other musics it is clear that the sounds that are made can only be made by the specific social structure that exists and hence they reflect this social structure. For an outside observer the music will express this social structure. For the participants who are immersed in the tradition, as was the case for European oil painting, it will merely be the 'right and proper' way of making music. Any music that isn't made in this way will, to them, seem lacking or insignificant.

Once again, Alan Lomax's cross-cultural comparisons make this clearer. In Song Structure and Social Structure he compares Pygmy-Bushman song style with Western European folk song on the basis of the "working organization of the musical group".

> There is a difference in kind between the main performance structure of Western European folk song, where a lone voice dominates a group of passive listeners, and the situation in which every member of a group participates, not only in the rhythm and the counterpoint of a performance, but in recreating the melody, as in the Pygmy hocketing style.... A comparison of the structure of inter-personal relationships and of role-taking in the two societies shows the same order of contrast, strongly hinting that musical structure mirrors social structure....
>
> (The Pygmies') choral songs may be begun by anyone, no matter what his talent; leadership, during the course of a song performance, shifts from an accomplished to a less accomplished singer with no apparent lessening of support from the whole group; and the chief delight of the singers is to listen to the effect of group-produced counterpoint as it echoes through the dark cathedral of the jungle....
>
> The vocal empathy of the Pygmies seems to be matched by the co-operative style of their culture... Normally the group never goes hungry. Their environment furnishes them what they need for food and shelter. The men hunt in groups and the

> women gather in groups. A precise system of dividing food assures every individual of his exact share. There are no specific penalties for even the greatest crimes, such as incest, murder or theft, nor do judges or law enforcement exist....
>
> A. Lomax, Song Structure and Social Structure, pp.435-7.

And so on. Lomax provides further detail, but his basic point is that the method by which their music is produced is co-operative and sharing as is the social structure over all.

The organisation of the typical Western European folk song is almost the opposite:

> The familiar pattern in British and Kentucky ballad singing is for the singer to sit quietly with his hands passive in his lap as he sings; his eyes are closed, or he gazes unseeingly over the heads of his listeners. He tells his stories in simple strophes that permit a concentrated narrative pace and demand the full attention of his audience. Thus, during his song, the listeners must remain silent and physically passive. Any movement on their part would interfere with the story. Any distraction would break the ballad singer's spell.
>
> ibid. p.440.

Lomax points out that exactly the same sort of compliance is demanded by a conductor from the musicians in a symphony orchestra and this reflects many other social relationships in Western Europe.

> Dominance-subordination, with a deep sense of moral obligation is the fundamental form of role-taking in the Protestant West.
>
> ibid. p.440.

It is here that Lomax's argument becomes inadequate, because

he is comparing a non-industrial unified society with an advanced capitalist society which is deeply fragmented. Thus we can't follow him any further without re-introducing the idea of a counter culture, and this actually allows the "working organization of the musical group" to become expressive in a much more active way, within a society.

For Lomax was arguing that if an anthropologist looks from the outside at different societies and their music he can see clearly how one reflects the other. But as I pointed out for European straight music, the participants wouldn't see this as an active part of the musical meaning. It would just be assumed that that was how you made music, and the important meanings would be carried within that form. However, at a level that wasn't conscious the working organisation of the group would serve to express and reinforce their view of the social structure of the society.

But the important point for our purposes is that if this can be true of a society as a whole it can also be true of different social groups within a society. Thus if European straight music expresses (whether latently or actively) "dominance-subordination, with a deep sense of moral obligation" then jazz and improvisation express something entirely different. As I described in Chapter one, jazz and improvised music can only be successfully produced by a group of sincere musicians all being responsible for their own contributions to a collective expression. The music is based on relationships that are essentially egalitarian in nature and is only at its best when all members of the group are contributing fully. Because of this, the emphasis in understanding the various sorts of meaning in the music is different. Again, ethnomusicology can provide some insight into this in the comparison which John Blacking has made between Mahler and a Venda chief in southern Africa:

> Some music expresses the actual solidarity of groups when people come together and produce patterns of sound that are signs of group allegiances; and other music expresses a virtual solidarity when a composer brings together patterns of sound that express aspects of social experience. Just as diverse groups in, say, Venda society can be brought together by a performance of their national dance, so in industrial society contrasting patterns of sound can be brought together by a composer through the single idea and corresponding thematic unity, of a symphony. Just as a Venda chief said to me, "You shall hear the finest performance imaginable of our national dance: I will call to my capital every available player in the district", so Mahler said, "To write a symphony means, to me, to construct a world with all the tools of the available technique".
>
> J. Blacking, How Musical Is Man?, p.104.

Although Blacking is drawing parallels between two different musics, the effect is actually to highlight the enormous differences in the ways the two musics are made, and hence in the meanings that they are capable of expressing. For where in Venda society music and dance can bring together diverse groups of people, in industrial society all a composer can bring together is contrasting patterns of sound. A composer can't be part of an actual world, he is condemned to always having to "construct a world". He can't be part of an "actual solidarity" through his music, he can only express a virtual solidarity. He may make his virtual expression through the medium of an enormous subservient hierarchy (up to several hundred in the case of huge orchestras and choirs) but it will still only be based on an actual solidarity of one!

Jazz and free improvisation, because they require the active creation of social relationships within the group before they can exist, come much nearer to the actuality of Venda music than to the virtuality of Mahler. If composed music can be compared to a painting, both being the simple expression of one person, improvised music can be compared to a drama, since

both are based on the developing relationships amongst a group of people. But improvised music comes even closer to everyday social life or conversation since the relationships are actually constructed and progressively adapted to the changing circumstances rather than being revealed as they are in a drama.

Improvised music is thus fundamentally a pluralistic expression, the juxtaposition and co-existence of different world views being more important than the unified definitive statement of composition. This pluralism is in itself a further element of the world view that is embodied in jazz and improvised music.

Sometimes it is said that it doesn't matter how a musical sound is made, the important thing is the sound itself. I disagree with this completely. Although there are some sounds that can be made equally well by composing or improvising there are far more that are uniquely associated with the social way in which they are produced. Thus, while it is easy enough to write out a saxophone solo in the style of Lester Young or Charlie Parker with rhythm section accompaniment, it is impossible to notate the way it swings, or to reproduce the spontaneity. Similarly it would be impossible to improvise a Mahler symphony. Because of this we can argue that the music actually expresses the social way in which it is made.

We have seen now how the social meaning of jazz and improvised music is partly the result of its use of intensional development and partly the result of the social way in which the music is produced. The third sort of meaning I am concerned with are those that are the result of the social and cultural context of the music, its social identity.

In Chapter one, I described how the jazz tradition places a high value on spontaneity and the moment, how a very rich level of detail builds up to an intense experience of the 'here and

now'. But this is not just true of African Americans' music, it is true of many other areas of their culture as well. The culture as a whole has a pronounced oral bias in comparison to the literate base of Euro-American culture. This is particularly clear in the speech patterns of the two cultures. Black American speech relies heavily on the special inflections and tones used by the speaker, in comparison to the level monotone favoured by white Americans. (This basic contrast is used to telling effect by the Black stand-up comic Richard Pryor in his caricatures of white and Black). Connected to this is the concept of hipness, which pervades the whole of Black culture but is especially important to the music. In its negative form, seen from the outside, hipness can be associated with social aloofness and exclusivity, but in its positive form to be hip is to be totally in touch with the moment - not in the sense of being trendy or up to date - but in the sense of being aware of all the cultural, historical and political forces at work in a particular situation and being able to respond spontaneously on the basis of this awareness. Seen from the Black culture, the dominant white culture in America is almost by definition unhip!

This close identification of Black music with concepts that run through Black culture as a whole gives the music part of its meaning for Black audiences.[1] Some writers have even suggested that music is the basis of Black culture:

> Of the minority groups in this country, blacks are the only one having no language of their own. Language serves to insulate a group and protect it from outsiders.... (The Negro) has another language, and that language is rhythm. This has been recognised by black people for some time, and they call it "soul".
>
> Julius Lester, Look Out, Whitey! Black Power's Gon' Get Your Mama, p.90.

1. In this connection, see also the passage quoted from Leroi Jones in Chapter 1 (page 25).

Thus in the context of American society the particular musical characteristics of jazz may be the primary way in which Blacks define themselves as a social group. For then, the music, both by its explicit and implicit expression of values that pervade Black American culture as a whole and by its incorporation of various elements of the dominant white culture, becomes at the same time a symbol of resistance which expresses social solidarity, and also a symbol of the culture's ability to survive and flourish and to use its relationship with the dominant culture creatively for its own benefit.

This social meaning, then, is strongly political. It resonates through the whole of American society, white and Black. The two extremes of reaction may be found amongst white Americans. Firstly, the music may seem to confirm all their worst fears and prejudices about Blacks and they may do their best to stamp it out. [1] Secondly, the music may be seen as a liberation from the constrictions of their own white culture and may be adopted as their own mode of expression.

This is the social meaning produced by the American context. In England the context is very different and thus the meaning is different. The simple contrast to be made is that while African Americans are affirming themselves as part of their community by playing jazz, English musicians are denying their community. Except in the short periods when jazz has had mass followings, the same is true of English audiences too. There

1. This is well documented by Neil Leonard in Jazz and The White Americans and Morroe Berger in Jazz: Resistance to the Diffusion of a Culture Pattern.

is simply no all pervasive system of cultural values into which the meanings of jazz can fit as they do in the USA.

Thus, listening to jazz as well as playing it, can be seen as an action which rejects the dominant culture, not in favour of an alternative community, but in favour of a generalised and distant otherness. Specific in terms of the music itself, but because of the distance geographically and socially, vague in terms of wider cultural connections. Of course, this may not be an active rejection. In fact it may not be recognised as a rejection at all, but simply a reaching out to this other culture that seems so much stronger and more authentic than one's own. This reaching out, then, is based on an abstract expression of community rather than on a community itself, but the actual action can begin to make a community, in the limited sense of a group of people who share this attraction towards jazz.

But since I have argued that the social meaning of jazz depends very much on the social cultural context, it is likely that the love of jazz will be the only experience that is shared by this group overall (although the musical content of jazz will still make certain tendencies more likely). White Americans, by comparison, because of their geographical closeness to Black culture, are more likely to be able to make jazz a coherent part of a comprehensive system of cultural values.

Pausing for a moment to look back at Chapter one, we can deduce from both the discussion of social meanings and the discussion of musical writing that some of the difficulties that writers have had in writing about jazz have arisen from not accepting its opposition to the dominant culture.

This explains the contortions the critics have had to go through in deciding whether it is art or not, and also the way in which certain styles of jazz that bear superficial resemblances to straight music have been considered superior to ones that don't.

There is one final sort of social meaning that must be mentioned: the meaning that arises from the music's nature as a social event. This could be described too as the social function of the music and is probably the area that would most often be associated with the term social meaning (or social significance). I have already implied this sort of meaning in Chapter one when I talked about the different careers possible for jazz musicians: community entertainer, artist, producer of market commodities. These three represent different sorts of social events and hence fulfill different social functions. Community entertainment would include dance music as well as music for bars. Art music would tend to centre around concert performances and the more specialised clubs and bars. The production of market commodities centres around making records and promoting them in whatever way possible. The three may coexist within the activities of one musical group and also the function may change after the music has been produced. Thus in Chapter one I suggested that types of jazz whose original social function was as dance music (community entertainment) were able to assume the functions of both art and market commodities when they were recorded and sent to Europe.

The audiences at the three types of event would also have

different priorities. At the community entertainment the point is to enjoy the whole event, and the music helps you to do this. At the concert, the priority is emotional enjoyment of the music for its own sake. In buying a record the intentions could be very varied.

All these functions can coexist both for musicians and for audiences. For a musician, a performance is always a job but in any of the three situations it might also be an opportunity for self-expression (in varying degrees). For a listener, a musical event of any sort might be a place for meeting and being with friends as much as an opportunity for emotional enjoyment through music.

The experience of the social event is actually part of the experience of listening to the music and is thus part of the social meaning. Ultimately the music can't be separated from the event in which it occurs, thus in this sense the social function of the music is fundamental.

This section has been long and wide ranging so I think it would be useful to summarise the arguments that I have put forward.

I started by describing the sorts of meaning that we are used to understanding in the everyday world. I used the example of red and looked at its meaning in various humanly produced and natural situations. I then showed how the main difference

between these and the meanings of cultural products was the breadth of meanings that were intended by the producer. Then, by referring to a discussion of European oil painting by John Berger, I described the different ways in which cultural products express meanings within the social context of their production and outside it.

After this, I directed my attention specifically towards music. I described at two contrasting levels, examples of how music is capable of expressing emotional and social meanings; one level being the small details within a particular style, and the other being the overall character of a whole style. Following this, I described four different social meanings of jazz and improvised music with which I will be concerned in this thesis. These were, firstly, the oppositional meaning expressed by the use of intensional development; secondly, the meaning which is the result of the social way in which the music is produced; thirdly, the meaning which is the result of the music's place through its connections with a particular class or other group in a complex and divided society; and fourthly, the meaning of the music as a social event.

Finally, I have found it useful to introduce one more term with respect to social meanings: the cultural moment. I use cultural moment to denote the precise configuration of all these social meanings as they relate to a particular cultural product or style as it exists in the world. It is particularly useful for my purposes because when applied to jazz and improvised music it suggests a parallel between the way musical forces come together to enrich the moment in a performance and the way wider social and cultural forces come together to give the content of the music its special

significance in each of its varied manifestations.

PART 2 - THE U.S.A.

CHAPTER 3

CHICAGO

The Chicago chapter of this thesis is based largely on fieldwork carried out during a four month visit to Chicago in the winter of 1977/78. During this time I gathered information of various different sorts. I recorded interviews with many AACM members, I talked casually to musicians and to others involved with the scene. I travelled extensively all over the city. Most days I attended musical events of one kind or another - not just AACM concerts, but also blues and jazz clubs and on one occasion a concert by a visiting Javanese gamelan orchestra. Irrelevant perhaps, but all part of the ongoing cultural environment of Chicago, and in fact this concert was attended by several AACM members. I also read as much as I could. Newspapers, articles, books - much of the everyday material that is not available in England.

The material that I now present is a selection from this, and also draws on my previous experience of jazz and Black music viewed from England.

I start by describing visits to two concerts in the South side - one an AACM concert and the other a blues club - as a way of getting straight into the experience of the music and some of the important issues involved. This is followed by a brief historical overview of jazz in Chicago, which leads into a discussion of the formation of the AACM in 1965. The nature of the organisation as it has changed during its fifteen years existence is then discussed, and after this I focus my attention on two of the members who I take as representatives of the two primary concerns that dominate the organisation. These are John Jackson who has a strong concept of the social and political relevance of the AACM and Fred Anderson, who I take as being a

hardworking and dedicated upholder of the musical tradition.

In the long section that follows these two biographies I try to show the musical significance of AACM music in relation to the developing history of jazz, and in relation to the community, both Black and white. This section focusses mainly on the Art Ensemble of Chicago and the musicians associated with it. I carry on the musical discussion into the section on Leo Smith, and point out how with a very different consciousness desires which are closely related can take the music in different directions. Being a musician who has travelled much, and an independent theorist, Smith also represents a third practical approach to the problems of combining social concerns with musical ones which can be compared to the approaches of Fred Anderson and John Jackson.

i) Two Concerts

Riding south on the north-south Elevated Railway (El), the racial divisions of the city are perhaps exaggerated, because many of the white people who do live in the Hyde Park area on the southside prefer to use the Illinois Central Railroad to get downtown. Although it costs more, it's quicker, safer and more comfortable. At Armitage, 2000 north, the El plunges underground and as you pass underneath the Loop, the spectacular, ostentatiously extravagant downtown area, at each successive station white passengers are replaced by Black. Emerging into daylight at Roosevelt Avenue, 1200 south, nearly all are Black and looking out of the windows you realise you are travelling through one of the more depressed south side areas.

It's a familiar journey for followers of the music because activities are split fairly evenly between the Lincoln Avenue area of the north side and Hyde Park on the south side, without much at all in between. The commercial music venues of the Loop and near northside have almost nothing to do with AACM music. Even Joe Segal's 'Jazz Showcase' only very occasionally ventures into this area of the music with a week by the Art Ensemble of Chicago or Sun Ra. AACM music, 'Creative music', is left to the dedicated few to present either as part of a mixed programme at places like Wise Fools Pub or Quiet Knight or as 'one off' concerts at the N.A.M.E. gallery or the Whole Earth bookshop up in Evanston. On the south side the music is presented by the AACM themselves normally in the Hyde Park area, often in a university hall, or a church, or any suitable public building hired for the evening. Like tonight's concert. Kahil El'Zabar, 'Meditations on the Spirit' at the Center for Continuing Education, 1307 East 60th street.

The tracks turn left at 40th street. The train clatters and screeches round the corner and heads towards the lake, slowing down for its next stop at Indiana Avenue. Then it turns south again and continues between Indiana and Prairie. Only feet

> away from the wooden verandahs at the backs of houses. Empty lots are common. Many have a pile of rubble in them as though the house had collapsed yesterday. Or a few cars are parked with a group of men standing beside them talking. Kids playing ball. This is the classic outsider's view of the ghetto. You're riding twenty feet up in the air looking down on it. Further up the carriage some kids are listening to a radio. The funky beat crosses the rhythm of the wheels on the track. Adds to the noise but seems to make some sense of it. The music goes with the kids' clothes. It's flamboyent and hip and in sharp contrast to the drabness outside.
>
> 55th street and time to get off. A busy station this one. You feel the wooden platform shaking as the train draws away and you walk down the stairs to the street with 50 others. You're in the thick of it now. Garfield Avenue, a bustling shopping street and busy dual carriageway road. A liquor store. A newstand. People. Drinking. Small hustles, 'Hey man, can you spare me 50 cents for the El?' You're part of it now, no idle speculation about segregation, syncopation, exaggeration, symbolisation, observation. This is about action. 'I hope you didn't take no picture of me there man, 'cos I wouldn't want nobody to take my picture without asking'. Buy the Chicago Defender, Black newspaper. 12 year old Black kid shot dead in the back by cop. 'I slipped on the ice and my gun went off'. (Remember police riots '68). Ali, the Champ, visits tea party for deprived Black kids.
>
> The bus is crowded when it finally comes. More families. Mothers with young kids. Stand near the back. Heading east, through Washington Park and continuing along 55th street. Get off at University Avenue and start walking the five blocks south to 60th street.

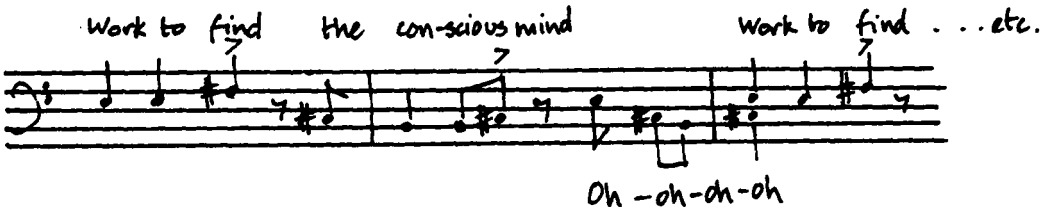
Another world again. The University of Chicago, the academy. Echoing footsteps across a courtyard. A security car drives slowly past. Time to pause and think again. The drabness is in people's clothes. Students, middle-class intellectuals, old tweed jackets. But the buildings are expensive. Enormous neo-classical, neo-gothic imitations of the European university. Stone steps up to oak doors. Wood panelling. Interspersed are

small detached houses with gardens. The academy, a centre of 'enlightenment', founded in 1890 outside the city limits but now flanked north and south by Black neighbourhoods. Only to the east in Hyde Park has it been able to maintain a 'safe' mixed area. To the south the interface between academy and ghetto was apparently too extreme and in the 60s, several people told me, the University supported a streetgang, the Blackstone Rangers to terrorise the neighbourhood, thus bringing property prices down for the University to buy up.

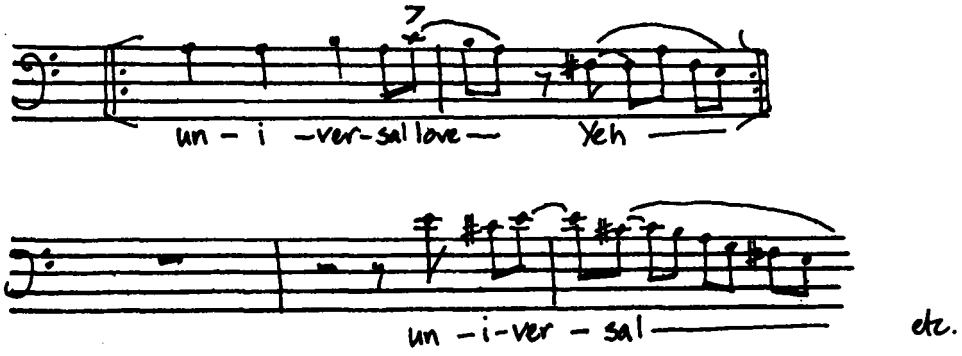
This is where we're heading. Cross the grass of the Midway Plaisance. 60th street. On the edge.

It's a new building with a spacious foyer where musicians and audience mill around. This version of the edge turns out to be most congenial. Many people know each other. Most AACM members plus wives, husbands and children are there and also many regular listeners. About equal numbers of Black and white. It is the first AACM concert for two months and a fair amount of the traditional hand-slapping greeting is going on. Pieces of African clothing are scattered around. If you have any you certainly wear it at an AACM concert, but in winter it will probably have to be underneath your quilted down jacket. It's a social occasion and there is no ill feeling about the concert starting an hour late.

The musicians walk on chanting:



The rhythm gathers momentum and Kahil El'Zabar introduces a counter-melody. His voice is clearer than the others with a trace of the hard nasal tone of Arabic singing.



The chant continues and the drummer Steve McCall starts playing cowbells and small percussion. Kahil now talks over the top. It comes over as an amazingly ambiguous combination of hip Black talk, official bureaucratic announcement and prayer!

> 'Good evening. We would like to ask your forgiveness for the time delay. There was a performance or programme that was earlier and which put our time back and we are very sorry. And we would like to say, that it is better to be in time than just on time. And, with us, for the conscious mind and meditation of the spirit'.

The chant is varied and harmonies are added to it and then gradually it stops as the percussion of McCall and El'Zabar takes over. McCall is playing full trap set drums and El'Zabar one tall African drum. Together they make a great surge of energy producing multiple layers of rhythm and sound. The cymbals make a high level drone as their sustained sound becomes more important than the rhythm of their attack. The saxes of Henry Threadgill and Ari Richard Brown contribute to the rhythm too. They start with short angular phrases, forming a kind of rhythmic dialogue above the percussion sound. A long low note blasted out answered by a three note phrase in the middle register and a dirty growl. At the bottom of the tonal spectrum the double bass of Malachi Favors can be felt rather than heard distinctly. Because of this attention is focussed on his appearance and action. Dressed in a long African robe with embroidery round the neck and a small hat decorated with beads, he stands very upright, plucking the strings above the fingerboard, higher than the usual position. The movements of his body seem vertical rather than sideways. Very little hip movement, but more of an excited bouncing. Childlike.

Meanwhile the energy level is rising, flowing out into the audience, the sax phrases are longer and

the two players more distinguishable from each other. Both have strong sounds, but Threadgill's is more vocalised. He takes the mouthpiece further into his mouth, the reed rests on his protruding lower lip. The air flows straight through from his stomach, the reed somehow acting like a displaced larynx. You feel the directness of the music. In this piece there are no solos, all the musicians play for the whole time (about twenty minutes), and the result is emotional release. A plateau of high energy is reached and expounded upon. The feeling is unified, the musicians are all aiming for the same thing. The saxes match their fruity vibratos with each other. Sometimes they work in dialogue, sometimes they go their separate ways, but always in relation to this energy flow, the pulse of the drums.

They play fast now. Long scalar phrases covering the whole range of the horn. Pushing each other to greater heights. The drums make sharper accents and more of them. It's loud. The sound fills your body. And then Threadgill is introducing more lyrical phrases while Brown works away at the bottom of his horn. Threadgill joins him. A stuttering collective dialogue. Now the drums subside. Wailing legato phrases. Cooling. Malachi's bowed long notes become prominent and then the piece is over.

Apart from the occasional exhortation, the audience have been quiet during the piece, but now they burst into warm applause, giving a sign of approval and encouragement to the musicians.

The next piece is a duet between Malachi Favors and Kahil El'Zabar. Malachi on bass and Kahil on a very wide bore bamboo flute. 'Duet in Tranquility'. If the last piece was about energy flow this one is about understated swing. Time for the audience to relax. The flute sound is round and warm and the phrases played flow over the simple rhythm. Its limited range is coloured by the use of grace notes, bent notes and slides. Malachi's bass is now clearly audible and his playing fits his appearance; very direct and undevious. Simple phrases repeated with small variations. Allowing notes their natural resonance. His tone has the stringy sound of some African stringed instruments. He uses gut strings and has to pluck them hard to make them fill the room. This piece has a pleasant 'folky' quality to it, a kind of generalised 'ethnic' feel. Generalised because the possibilities of the flute aren't fully explored in comparison to much African flute playing for example, which is so rich in detail. It captures

the simple charm but not the complex essence. However, it forms a most enjoyable interlude before the group returns to play a piece by Ari Brown.

8-48 has the classic jazz structure of a theme followed by two sax solos followed by a repeat of the theme, all over a driving $\frac{4}{4}$ beat (although the theme itself is $\frac{3}{4}$).

The second half begins with a piece based on African sounding polyrhythms, the different instruments using rhythms based on 3, 4 and 7 beats. On this Threadgill plays the hubcaphone, a self-made precussion instrument made from car hubcaps of different pitches and tones.

It is followed by a rhapsodic duo, Ari Brown and Kahil El'Zabar, based on the harmonic structure of 'Giant Steps' by John Coltrane, one of his most influential pieces. The structure is complex, but Ari extends each section until he has explored it thoroughly and then moves on. The music has a gentle flow to it, tenor and drum blending in well together. A tribute to a master of the tradition. Memories of 'Trane in the minds of the audience bind the music to its recent past.

The last piece is another group piece, making a collective improvisation from a simple theme, this time with Kahil playing amplified thumb piano, Ari on soprano sax, Henry on bass flute. As an ending for the concert it is actually a little disappointing because the thumb piano seems to lose the quality of its tone by being amplified (in Zimbabwe and Zambia it's often played just for the player or amplified with gourds) and the soprano and flute are out of tune with each other.

However, this does little to dampen the warm response of the audience to the concert as a whole. They feel satisfied. They have been to the edge. Whichever side they came from they have broadened their position. A taste of Africa, intense emotion, something not quite known but feeling strong, an extension from the tradition. And abstraction too, intellect, spirituality. Many stay behind to talk to each other and the musicians, not wanting to lose this feeling too quickly.

Step outside into the snow. Start walking south to catch the El at 64th street. 'Hey Will. Don't walk that way man, that's a bad area there. I'll give you

a ride to 55th street'. The edge.

The AACM, then, pushing the music further into an abstract artistic expression by negotiating the edge. Thriving on it in fact. Using both university and ghetto as means for restoring the links between the music and community. Extending the tradition in a way that puts the music back on the edge. Carrying balances. Emotion and intellect. Tradition and innovation. Entertainment and art. Black audience, white audience. Abstraction, directness.

Two miles north, beyond the edge, at Teresa's, time has stopped.

> Outside, empty lots, derelict buildings, rubbish in the street. You feel a little uneasy walking through it. But once inside the feeling is warm and congenial again. The room is long and narrow with a bar down the right hand side, and at the far end the band is playing a driving but relaxed blues. Sammy Lawthorn, the group's guitarist is playing a solo over a heavy drum backbeat. The familiar cadences fill the space. Stretched across the room at waist height by the door is a metal chain, and as you pay your one dollar entrance fee Junior Wells lifts it up and ushers you in. Down the left people sit around tables. Others are standing by the bar, drinking and talking. Probably forty or fifty altogether. The decor is drab and basic. Near the low ceiling some heating pipes which have been decorated and obscured with coloured tinsel run the length of the room.
>
> The audience are all Black apart from a few young white enthusiasts and probably live in the neighbourhood. In age, they range from late 30s upwards since this is basically old music being played here - urban blues from the 50s and early sixties. The audience ride with the music - it is a form they know very well, they know where it will take them, its ups and downs, its emotional patterns. There are a few unexpected variations here and there, but the real skill of the performers lies in fulfilling essential emotional requirements in the audience - making them feel good - 'telling it like it is'. There is a stir of expectation as Jimmy Cotton walks up to the band and opens his case of harmonicas.

Cotton is a local hero - a virtuoso harmonica player who has achieved some international success, but whenever able he plays at Teresa's. He is dressed more casually than the rest of the band. Just a black T-shirt and blue jeans with a row of silver studs down each leg. He plays sitting down for the first set - 'I just got out of jail - the cops said I'd robbed a bank, but I tell you if I'd robbed a bank I wouldn't be down here right now!' - the music is good, the band and Cotton playing well together. He goes into an unaccompanied harmonica break, two choruses, and there's a little confusion when he counts the band back in with his right hand while he goes on playing one handed. But the music can take it - there is no pretence involved, the essentials are there and can't be upset by details.

I nearly said there was no show involved but that wouldn't be true because Cotton like all blues singers is a performer. He plays to the audience and makes them feel comfortable and involved. He responds to the audience, but this is in a functional way that actually enhances the music - not at all patronising. The flow of energy is in both directions, from the audience in the form of whistles and shouts and some relaxed dancing and from the band in the form of their movements and facial expressions as well as through the music. And the effect of the flow is to increase the intensity of the music. A sense of heightened awareness spreads through the musicians and audience as the pulse of the music falls more and more exactly into place. The harmonica phrases and singing more and more confirm a state that already exists in the music rather than building towards it. At this stage the music seems to produce itself.

It is the second set now. Cotton has changed into a white T-shirt and a denim cap and is standing up to play. By about half way through the set the two waitresses have more or less given up their job of serving drinks and are giving all their attention to the music. Soon they are dancing, and by the end one of them is embracing Cotton and expressing the feelings of the audience directly. Not all the audience show physical signs of excitement; some keep the rhythm inside them and continue smoking and drinking or talking, whatever they happen to be doing, but you can be sure the music makes them feel good and that they are enjoying the expressiveness of the others.

There is nothing particularly unusual about this session - Bob

Koester, who has recorded both blues and AACM music, might call it 'just blues in a bar'[1] - but within the social group that it serves its function is important. The music is 20 years old now and not a developing form, but because of the maturity of musicians and audience there are no illusions about the possibilities either for the musicians or for the audience. This is why I was tempted to say there was no show involved in the music. The relationship between musicians and audience is an honest one and a known one. These are not naive musicians hoping to make it into the big time, using a neighbourhood club as a first step to a career in commercial music. They've already seen good times and bad times and will take whatever's happening. Various styles of blues have achieved international popularity at certain times, but the heart of the music is here in its community context. This music is an expression of 'how it is' to this particular community of musicians and listeners. It is an expression of shared experience and knowledge that binds the community together. But more than being an expression of the community, the way it is intricately bound into the social life of the ghetto in neighbourhood bars means it is actually a part of the community. So its strength lies in the fact that it both expresses and is, and in the link between the two.

But the community expressed is now at least twenty years old, and although the music still maintains some of its 'nowness' by the specific means I referred to in the introduction, it is, in a sense, isolated from contemporary history. It speaks of the 'ageless' truth of deprivation and exploitation in personal terms, and appeals to strongly felt personal emotions. It has thus gradually become associated with a particular set of fixed attitudes and beliefs. This is in contrast to when the music was new and it expressed a changing, developing ghetto community by adopting a style that was much harder and more aggressive than the older rural blues forms. But now the music proposes change neither in terms of individual social mobility (as does much

1. See page 135.

commercial music), nor in terms of political class struggle. Rather, it preserves the strength of the ideas of community that have always been present in spite of repression because it is a positive culture that can't be repressed. For some of the listeners there is probably an element of nostalgia. The music may remind them of the emotions it aroused in them when they first heard it. And these may well have been less cynical and resigned than now. So in this sense too it represents a positive force. For although most of the audience may have thrown away some of the naive aspirations of their youth it still feels good to be reminded of how you felt then, and also that there's some ongoing shared belief in 'how it is'.

Time has stopped. But for the listeners the music is an indication of the fact that nothing ever changes. Their feelings and emotions of twenty years ago are still being expressed sincerely and creatively now. In spite of history moving on this music confirms the relevance of their world view. And most significantly it is their music.

Two concerts, then. And two relationships between music and community, expressing very different cultural moments. Blues, an expression of a community culture at a local level, which nevertheless has been taken up by enthusiasts all over the world and treated as a valuable art form. AACM music, an abstract art form, selfconsciously aware of its potential to be recognised as such around the world, nevertheless trying hard to relate directly to its local community and cultural history.

Both shared certain musical qualities too. Especially this quality of building up to an intense emotional level and then riding along on it; albeit in very different ways. The stance of the musicians towards the audience is different and hence the type of communication. The AACM push the edge and thus make demands on the audience who must listen actively, whereas

the blues musicians are telling a story that is well known, yet still relevant. Nevertheless the two musics are easily recognisable as part of the same tradition.

For the AACM it is of much significance that their music exists alongside parts of its own history that are, in a very real sense, still alive. Blues is only one example of this; bebop, the new jazz of the 1940s would be another, and apart from the forms of the music that are still being practised, there is contact with older forms through community memory. Even the oldest jazz in Chicago is still within living memory.

The AACM is thus operating at the heart of the tradition, Chicago being one of the major cities in the United States in which jazz and Black music developed. An awareness of this context is crucial to understanding the organisation.

ii) History Leading to the Formation of the AACM

The beginnings of jazz in Chicago coincide with the Great Migration of Negroes from the South that happened in the second decade of this century. Until then, through its ninety year history, Chicago had been populated by wave after wave of European immigrants taking up employment opportunities in the booming metropolis of the midwest. The Black population had been small (in 1910 it was 44,000 or 2% of the population) and relatively spread out (only half the Blacks lived in the Black Belt on the South and West sides). By 1920, despite legislative attempts by Southern states to stop the migration, the work opportunities provided by an economy thriving on the war in Europe and cut off from the European labour force, had attracted enough Blacks to bring their total up to 109,000 or 4.1% of the population. And all but 10% of them were now concentrated in the Black Belt.

Included in the migration were many musicians. Particularly significant historically was a number from New Orleans playing a music derived from the ragtime style that was then prevalent and known as 'jass' or 'jazz'. These, of course, included not only the early jazz masters who were soon to become world famous, such as Louis Armstrong, Joe Oliver, Sidney Bechet, Jelly Roll Morton, but also many lesser known names. Marshall Stearns estimated that by 1920 there were "over 40 outstanding jazzmen from New Orleans in Chicago". [1]

Looking back, we can see that Chicago in the twenties was the jazz centre of the world, although at the time the local situation was more important than the international one, since the music was only just starting to be recorded extensively.

> After the war and during the 20s, entertainment boomed in Chicago, and the nightspots where musicians could work seemed innumerable. Whether a musician could read music or not, played sweet

1. M. Stearns, The Story of Jazz, p.164.

> or hot, low-down or high-society, Chicago's nightlife accomodated him.
>
> L. Ostransky, Jazz City, p.102.

These nightspots included taxi-dance halls (where men paid ten cents to dance with a hostess), cabarets, roadhouses, hotel ballrooms and independent ballrooms. They were spread out all over the city and outside the city too, but their accessibility to musicians depended on both style and race.

> Although the best-paying jobs went to Chicago's white musicians willing to play 'sweet', some black musicians with similar proclivities were able to find work outside the Black Belt. The steadiest employment for blacks, however, was to be found in the Black Belt, and by the end of the twenties the focus of Black Belt nightlife was on Thirty-fifth street and a half-dozen blocks between State street and South Parkway - Wabash, Michigan, Indiana, Prairie, and Calumet Avenues.
>
> ibid., p.105.

By the end of the 1920s the boom had ended and many jazz musicians either left Chicago or played more commercial music. Most of the ballrooms went over to bigger groups with more emphasis on presentation. On the South Side blues and boogie-woogie took a more and more prominent part and as I implied above, Chicago remains an important centre for blues right up to the present day. So far as jazz history is concerned, attention focussed more and more on New York for new developments and, apart from individual performers it wasn't until the mid-sixties that Chicago once again became a centre for innovation.

During the 40s and 50s there was attention first on New York as the centre of bebop and then also on California which was the home of cool jazz. The centre for purely commercial music shifted to the West coast with Hollywood and the many TV studios playing

a significant role. However it still remained true that New York was the place where young musicians were expected to test themselves. Meanwhile Chicago became associated with a tough no-nonsense approach to playing, heavily rooted in the blues. Tenor player Gene Ammons might be considered typical. His playing had some of the harmonic and rhythmic agility of bebop but with a gutsy bluesy sound, no doubt influenced partly by his father, Albert Ammons, who was a boogie-woogie pianist. The scene in nightclubs and bars continued to flourish at a local level, but most of the musicians who became well known were those who left. Examples are Johnny Griffin, Lee Konitz, Lennie Tristano, Ira Sullivan. Excellent musicians who stayed such as Von Freeman, Nicky Hill, have never become widely known outside Chicago. The 50s were also characterised by a Dixieland revival by white musicians, which at least on the north side seems to have overshadowed the bebop scene.

Meanwhile the south side black belt was steadily expanding southwards and with it the mainstreet and entertainment centre moved south. First to around 47th street then to 63rd, making it over 6 miles from the Loop and relatively inaccessible for whites.

Up until the mid 50s the local scene was still thriving with clubs and bars on the south side presenting both local musicians and visitors. Joseph Jarman expanded on this:

> 63rd and Cottage Grove was a whole strip. You could walk from Woodlawn to Cottage Grove and you could hear all the great local musicians - Johnny Griffin, Gene Ammons, Von Freeman, Wilbur Ware - and also some of the New York musicians - Sonny Rollins, Miles Davis.
>
> Also at that time they played the music in the streets - like the record shops - the popular music then was so-called 'jazz', 'bebop'. You could walk down the street and hear the early Coltrane bands, Jackie McLean, all this kind of stuff just coming out of the loudspeakers as you walked down the street.

> Also Downtown, Southside, Westside - I mean there was music all over the city, but the forces that be eliminated all that. There was too much happening, so they closed down much of the South side some of the West side and all of the Downtown places... I think just politics caused it. Mayor Daley and his attitudes towards what the city needed, what was good for it.
>
> I think this was one of the situations that lent itself to the formation of the AACM. There were fewer and fewer places to work and play. Now there are only two places that I know of, but they used to have places where you could go and learn. You could learn one song, then you could go to a different place each night and play your one song. You could learn one blues. You could play it and then listen to all the others do one song. And if they were on a better level, they'd do two songs!

The culture, then, was being repressed. What had been a community culture that included a musical education system was being changed by political and commercial forces into a purely economic activity. No doubt there was corruption involved in many of the clubs but this was true of both the City administration and the musicians union too. The interests of a minority group of jazz musicians was unlikely to pull much weight with either, and the mere fact that the link between the music and its social function had developed through 50 years had little power against economic and political forces.

Roscoe Mitchell:

> The union passed a law that club owners couldn't have more people playing in a club than a trio unless they had a special sort of licence. A lot of club owners couldn't afford it, so a lot of musicians were on the outs.
>
> I don't really know the reason for it - unless they were trying to squeeze the music out of the ghettos. The only places that could afford it were on the North Side - the London House,

> the Plugged Nickel, the Hungry Eye. McKie's was the last big place on the South Side, they used to bring in Trane and Dexter Gordon.

Live music also began to be pushed out by discotheques on a large scale, and presenting live music at all became economically difficult, so the few clubs that did remain presented mainly a bebop-derived music which, while it had been revolutionary in the 1940s, by 1960 had become firmly mainstream. In any case much of the new jazz being developed by young musicians in the 1960s was coming into direct conflict with the aims of bar owners. The bass player Buell Neidlinger has described this conflict eloquently:

> Bar owners aren't interested in this because if there's one thing they hate to see it's a bunch of people sitting around open-mouthed with their brains absolutely paralysed by the music, unable to call the waiter.
>
> Buell Neidlinger, quoted by Spellman in Black Music: Four Lives, p.8.

Of course, by no means all the new music paralysed people's brains. The main point was that any music that required the concentrated attention of the listener to be enjoyed was not really suited to a bar environment. Because of this many of the young musicians in Chicago in the early 60s found that there was absolutely no suitable outlet for the sort of music they wanted to make, and they were not prepared to restrict their creativity by making commercial viability the prime determining factor of their music. Some of these musicians gravitated together in a big band later known as the Experimental Band, the main organiser of which was Richard Abrams. This was in 1961 and the band used to rehearse every Saturday morning, but rarely played in public. Through these meetings the idea of a collective gradually began to take shape. Steve McCall takes up the story:

> We used to meet up after jobs at certain restaurants in the early 60s. You would go and hang out - 3 or 4 or 5 o'clock in the morning. We would talk about ideas the different aspirations of all of us. We were all young musicians. Three of us, Jodie Christian, Richard Abrams and myself decided to try and start an organisation. We just wanted to get in touch with all the musicians in Chicago who we thought might be receptive to the idea and even those who might not be - everybody.

The first meeting was in May 1965 and at least 50 or 60 musicians turned up. Many considered it an over radical idea.

> A lot of the guys couldn't understand how it would work, and certain guys had strong ideas because we called everyone up and told them what it was about and think it over, so a lot of them came with lists of ideas of the way they think things should be run.

Attendance at meetings settled down to between 20 and 30, Richards Abrams was elected the first chairman and a charter of aims was produced, which is still in force.

PURPOSES OF THE AACM:

I. To cultivate young musicians and to create music of a high artistic level for the general public through the presentation of programs designed to magnify the importance of Creative music.

II. To create an atmosphere conducive to artistic endeavours for the artistically inclined by maintaining a workshop for the sole purpose of bringing talented musicians together.

III. To conduct a free Training Program for inner-city young people.

IV. To contribute financially to charitable organisations.

V. To encourage sources of employment for worthy, creative musicians.

VI. To set an example of high moral standards for musicians and to uplift the public image of creative musicians.

VII. To increase mutual respect between creative artists and musical tradesmen (booking agents, managers, promoters and instrument manufacturers), etc.

VIII. To uphold the tradition of elevated, cultured musicians handed down from the past.

IX. To stimulate spiritual growth in creative artists through participation in programs, concerts, recitals, etc.

The aims were ambitious, in that they were totally open-ended but unlike the Jazz Composers Guild (as we shall see in Chapter four), the means by which they were pursued were careful and realistic. Where the JCG sought to fulfill all the needs of the members and attempted to remove them from the market place, the AACM conceived of its purpose as being to add to the activities of its members not to replace them. Members were free to take whatever work they wanted to earn money, but when it came to playing AACM concerts there were fairly strict guidelines for what was permissible. Most significant were that the music had to be based on original material rather than on standard tunes, and that at least two thirds of any group that played must be AACM members. The emphasis was on complete artistic control of the music including choice of musicians, and both the composed and improvised parts of the music.

The economically moderate approach was in keeping with the musical scene in the city because there was certainly no chance that musicians would be able to survive from playing Creative Music and nothing else in Chicago. The AACM wasn't formed to fight commercial exploitation of musicians because they had already been so excluded that they weren't even given the opportunity to be exploited. Rather it was a case of building up an alternative system more or less from scratch, of 'cultivating an audience' as one member, Roscoe Mitchell put it, with all the ambiguity that that term implies. (Mitchell now lives on a small farm in Wisconsin!) In the end this approach was as crucial to the survival of the organisation as was the musical policy and together they combined to give the organisation a flexibility which enabled it to work in different ways in different periods and yet retain a strong continuity in its musical character and identity.

The reasons for the formation of the AACM are fairly evident from the list of aims. The musicians felt that it was necessary to rebuild completely their relationship with the community, both in terms of what they did and in terms of how they were seen from the outside. It was an attempt to re-possess their culture which was progressively being taken out of their hands by the market forces serving the interests of the dominant culture. But to realise the significance and radical nature of these aims it is necessary to remember the typical lifestyles and consciousness of the previous generation of Black jazz musicians, the bebop players, for it was this that formed the immediate social context for the start of the AACM (as opposed to the economic and musical contexts which have already been mentioned). Joseph Jarman explains this in terms of his own character before he became associated with Richard Abrams and the AACM.

> Until I had the first meeting with Richard Abrams, I was 'like all the rest' of the 'hip' ghetto niggers; I was cool, I took dope, I smoked pot, etc. I did not <u>care</u> for the life that I had been given. In having the chance to work in the Experimental Band with Richard and the other musicians there, I found the first something with meaning/reason for doing. That band and the people there was the <u>most</u> important thing that ever happened to me.
>
> sleevenote to 'Song For' - Delmark DL410.

Drugs in particular had destroyed many Black musicians and had caused much disruption in the public presentation of the music; (Nat Hentoff gives a good discussion of this in <u>The Jazz Life</u>) but this was only one aspect of the hip coolness referred to by Jarman. Apart from a few exceptions Black musicians had not formed organisations (the most notable early exception was a co-operative agency for Black musicians organised in New York at the beginning of this century by Will Marion Cooke), but had based their social relationships around cliques of musicians associated with particular bands. In any case, for musicians who are working regularly and travelling around the country it is difficult to

give the continuous involvement that an organisation needs. So a lack of work opportunities could be seen as a requirement in two ways, both as a stimulus to action and as providing time for the action.

The consciousness of the bebop musicians has been well summed up by Chicago writer Jerry Figi who was one of the early champions of the AACM.

> Bebop lived in a world of shadows, a subculture of scuffling and sharecropping, of second-class citizenship despite longstanding acknowledgement that jazz is America's most unique contribution to the arts. The social outlook of the Beboppers was essentially negative, that of the hip slave, a can't-fight-city-hall cynicism, a sly rationale of self-protection by evasion, frustration muffled by cool stance.
>
> J. Figi, Jazz: A Family for the New Music, p.19.

Figi locates the causes of the cynicism in the economic and social conditions. The other way in which the economic pressure manifested itself was in inducing a high degree of competitiveness between musicians. In the 40s and 50s jazz operated at the edge of the commercial entertainment world, not outside it as in the 60s. This meant that there were always deals and opportunities for certain individuals which would weaken any collectivity that might have developed.

For early jazz, Francis Newton sees this lack of organisation amongst musicians as being connected with their social origins as well.

> The origins of jazz lay among that section of the poor which, though extremely oppressed, is least given to collective organisation and political consciousness, and which finds its 'freedom' by side-stepping oppression rather than by facing it: the unskilled, pre-industrial, big-city labouring poor.
>
> F. Newton, The Jazz Scene, p.271.

But certainly by the mid 60s this description didn't fit the music. The AACM includes a wider cross-section of classes and many of the musicians have studied at college or gained experience of the world through the army, so if Newton's explanation had provided a way of understanding the lack of organisations amongst early jazz musicians it equally provides a way of understanding why by the 1960s this was no longer the case. In fact it is clear that the music was now ripe for such a development, the general conditions being the steady rise in Black consciousness, the difficulty of economic conditions for the music, and the increased awareness and education of many of the musicians. That it was a response to general conditions is shown by the fact that similar organisations started in several other cities in the U.S.A., the AACM being merely the first and the longest surviving.

But it is also significant that New York, the jazz metropolis was only able to sustain an organisation for 10 months. The attitudes of New York musicians were still steeped in competitiveness and the AACM were very aware of this. Lester Bowie, in 1968:

> Once when a very well known Jazz Trumpeter was in Chicago, I felt it would be a very stimulating experience for all concerned, if I went down and partook in the ancient, extinct, lost (except in the A.A.C.M.) art of sitting in. Would you believe, that this cat wanted to fight, rather than let me play!!! When I tried to explain something relative to the ideas, purposes and goals of the A.A.C.M. I was told in no uncertain terms that this supposed giant of jazz did not know or care about the A.A.C.M., or anything it stood for.
>
> Lester Bowie in The New Regime, p.5.

There are two words that are conspicuous by their absence from the chapter. These are jazz and Black. The question of the replacing of the word jazz with Creative Music will be dealt with in the section on Leo Smith so I will only deal with Black here.

The AACM has always been an organisation for the benefit of Black musicians and Black music and in this sense the published aims are more generalised than the practice. There have been very few white members (I know of only one) and the organisation has never concerned itself with traditions other than the African-American one, so it is in this sense that it can be called Black. (The Euro-American straight tradition is only one of many musical traditions present in Chicago which are not included. Amongst these are Mexican, Cuban and American mountain music).

In an article written in 1973 Richard Abrams and John Jackson were much more specific about the long term aims of the AACM. Many of the original aims are echoed here in more specifically radical terms.

> The Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians' (AACM) primary concerns are about survival, accountability and achievement. The Black creative artist must survive and persevere in spite of the oppressive forces which prevent Black people from reaching the goals attained by other Americans. We must continue to add copiously to an already vast reservoir of artistic richness handed down through the ages. Black artists must control and be paid for what they produce, as well as own and control the means of distribution.

As well as controlling their music Jackson and Abrams argued that they should control the mediation of their music through journals and radio stations.

> The prevalent attitude that anybody can play jazz and blues has given rise to a plethora of white groups who are now being accepted as

> true purveyors of Black music. The public spends millions of dollars on these groups, while seminal Black artists literally starve. Many Black artists of exceptional capabilities in the Chicago area are unable to secure work because the so-called Black stations project only what is allowed by the white power structure.

The media should be accountable to the community since they use the community for commercial gain.

> In the area of accountability, Black artists should be held responsible to their brothers and sisters, who, in turn, should demand excellence and give their support to Black endeavours.

Abrams and Jackson go on to elaborate on the sort of consciousness required of AACM members.

> Achievement is a concern in that it is the prime requisite for those of us who wish to embrace Blackness in its fullness. This means a committment to the idea that the creative learning process should never cease...
>
> The AACM is attempting to precipitate activity geared toward finding a solution to the basic contradictions which face Black people in all facets of human structures, particularly cultural and economic.

Finally they argue that there is a direct link between the cultural and the economic in that an understanding of and participation in Black culture will strengthen individuals for participation and control of the whole social process.

> Our concerts and workshops in the schools and in the community are an effort to expose our Black brothers and sisters to creative artists contemporary to their time and present to them a factual account of their glorious past as an undergirding for facing the future. Demonstrating the creation and production of art will enhance the cultural and spiritual

> posture of a people; and it is our firm belief that artistic appreciation will so enhance cultural and spiritual growth that the individual's participation in the social process will be highly accelerated. It is the contention of the AACM that it is not the potential which Black people have which will determine what they do but, rather, how they feel about themselves.
>
> Black World, Nov. 73, pp.72-4.

The article I have quoted here appeared in the widely-read magazine Black World and is actually the most detailed manifesto of the AACM I have read since it shows not only the practical aims of the AACM but also the rationale behind the aims and the theory of culture that they rest on. The emphasis overall is an insistence on the place of the music in society and of course it is actually the organisation that mediates this relationship, through its work.

The structure of the AACM is relatively formal. There are officers whose responsibilities are clearly defined. Members pay weekly dues and there is even a system of fines for members who fail to carry out their duties. Decisions are made democratically at weekly meetings and new members must be nominated by two members and then voted on by a meeting. The main requirement seems to be that members should show a high level of committment towards Creative Music, that they should be dedicated to making an original music. Strong musical ability in itself isn't a requirement, although this would be one way of demonstrating commitment.

There have been three main stages in the development of the AACM. Firstly the period from 1965 to 1969 when the emphasis was on giving concerts in Chicago. At one stage there was even a concert every night but generally for this period it was about

once a week. The Saturday school for young musicians was started and there were also some community activities such as giving free concerts on beaches. Some of the musicians made records on the Chicago based Delmark and Nessa labels which helped spread their names around. (The first AACM record was Sound by the Roscoe Mitchell sextet and there soon followed records by Joseph Jarman, Richard Abrams, Anthony Braxton, Maurice McIntyre and Lester Bowie).

In 1968 and 69 two of the young members died. These were the pianist Christopher Gaddy who died from injuries in the Korean war, and Charles Clark who had a stroke. Both were in their mid-twenties and it was a profound shock for many of the members. Chicago and the USA in general seemed to be a dead-end situation. Apart from the lack of recognition for the music, American imperialism was suffering the most violent resistance it had ever known at home and abroad. Chicago itself witnessed the police rioting at the Democratic party convention of 1968 and shootouts between the Black Panthers and the police. There was also rioting on the West Side when Martin Luther King was assassinated in 1968. To many of the AACM members it seemed that the music couldn't continue in this environment and in 1969 eight of them left Chicago and went to live in Paris.

The drummer Steve McCall was the first to go and he was followed by the four members of the Art Ensemble of Chicago (Roscoe Mitchell, Joseph Jarman, Lester Bowie, Malachi Favors) and then by the trio of Leo Smith, Leroy Jenkins and Anthony Braxton. Although in a sense the move was prompted by particular events, it was in another sense a logical step along the road the musicians had chosen as Roscoe Mitchell explained:

> We sort of had to do that. The type of music we were dealing with we had to cultivate an audience. We found that it was necessary to go out and actually go to these different places and actually be there for a while and play and then gradually build up an audience. Which is basically what we did. We went around the United States to

> different places, and then after we had done that we decided that we should go to Europe. So we did it there.

In 1969 France proved to be particularly receptive to AACM music, particularly to the Art Ensemble which included a large element of theatre and political humour in its performances. In contrast to their lack of support in the U.S. they now found themselves playing government sponsored tours and made about 15 records in a period of two years.

Meanwhile in Chicago the AACM kept only a very low key activity going, held together principally by the chairman and original inspiring force, Muhal Richard Abrams, and the main administrator John Jackson.

The third stage began in the early 70s when most of the musicians returned from Europe. However of the eight only Favors and Jarman settled permanently in Chicago and the organisation was really carried forward by a number of new young members coming in. News gradually filtered through from Europe about the success of the Art Ensemble and Braxton/Smith/Jenkins and after a 'sort of poverty period' (Mitchell) work started building up in the States. The AACM then became a kind of base organisation in Chicago held together by the young members and the older ones who didn't travel and hosting visits by the more established musicians. The latter for their part would provide contacts and opportunities for some of the younger musicians, and spread the word about the AACM. In concerts the emphasis went away from shoe-strings presentations towards less frequent grant-aided concerts and a short festival every summer. It was actually not until 1977 that the AACM received its first major funding from the government with a grant of $8,500 from the National Endowment for the Arts.

Paradoxically this increased success in terms of funding coincided with more and more of the members going to live in

New York where AACM musicians began to dominate the scene both in terms of live gigs and recording. Members now living in New York include Leroy Jenkins, Kalaparusha (Maurice McIntyre), Henry Threadgill, Fred Hopkins, Steve McCall, Amina, George Lewis, Chico Freeman, Leonard Jones and Muhal Richard Abrams.

The Saturday school continued and it is this above all that has demonstrated the ongoing community commitment of the organisation. In a sense it has gone full circle now because one of the teachers there, Douglas Ewart, actually learnt to play at the school himself. I visited the school several times in the winter of 1977/78 and at that time it consisted of a wide range of classes, held every Saturday morning at premises provided free at the Northeastern University Center for Inner City Studies on East Oakwood Boulevard in the South side. The schedule ran as follows:

a.a.c.m. great black music
1059 W. 107th Pl.
Chicago, Ill. 60643

Registration for classes will be held Sat. Oct. 1, & Sat. Oct.8, at The Northeastern University Center for Inner City Studies (700 E. Oakwood Blvd.) on the 5th floor, between the hours of 9 a.m. and 1:00 p.m. The semesters are ten weeks in length. The first class of the fall semester will be Oct. 15,. A $12.00 material fee will be expected of all students at time of registration. Further information may be obtained by calling 288-6935 or 994-7688.

AACM SCHOOL OF MUSIC
FALL SEMESTER

INSTRUMENTAL CLASSES.....

REEDS (Instructor: Mwata Bowden) Reeds, woodwinds, composer, arranger) Instruction in saxophone, flute, and clarinet. Students of all levels will be accepted.

REEDS (Instructor: Douglas Ewart) Reeds, woodwinds, composer, arranger) Instruction in saxophone, flute, bassoon, clarinet, wood flute, with additional emphasis placed on yoga exercises to aid breathing. students of all levels will be accepted.

BASS (Instructor: Malachi Favors Magoustous) Instruction in bass. Students of all levels will be accepted.

PIANO (Instructor: Adegoke Steve Colson) Piano, composer, arranger,woodwinds. Students of all levels will be accepted.

PERCUSSION (Instructor: Kahil El-Zabar) African percussion, congas, mbira,flutes, Composer, arranger. Instruction in various African percussion.

SUN PERCUSSION (Instructor: Famoudou Don Moye) Drums, congas, mallet instruments, composer, African and American instruments. Instrument making and repair Students of all levels will be excepted.

THEORY CLASSES.....

INTRODUCTORY
(Instructor: Douglas Ewart) Methods for the development of basic principles of theory will be examined.

INTRODUCTORY
(Instructor: Charles Wes Cochran Jr.) Basic theoretical concepts of intervals, scales and chords. This class is designed to initiate the student with no previous background in theory.

INTERMEDIATE
(Instructor: Charles Wes Cochran Jr.) The development and exploration of tools and techniques of introductory music theory. This class presupposes a working knowledge of scales, intervals and modes.

HARMONY (Instructor: Edward L. Wilkerson Jr.) Tenor saxophone, composer, arranger. Harmony and principles of voice leading. This class presupposes a working knowledge of scales and intervals.

MUSIC OF THE AFRICAN IN AMERICA
(Instructor: Kahil El-Zabar) A philosophical approach to the study of Black music in America; It's past,present, and future. Students of adult level will be accepted.

The actual content of the classes and the style of teaching varied from class to class. For example, Douglas Ewart's class concentrated on sound production on the flute emphasising the idea of producing a continuous broad tone by means of controlled breathing. Adegoke Steve Colson's piano class was about the harmonic structure of the blues, which he described in terms of conventional notation. In this case the link he made between the notation and improvisation was uneasy since he demonstrated improvising on a blues but didn't actually explain what he was doing. Kahil El'Zabar's class covered a wide range. He drew a contrast between African music based on rhythm, and Western music based on melody developing this into a discussion of the different social role of music in African societies including their emphasis on religion and the idea of 'wholeness'. 'Whatever you do, that is part of it'. He then proceeded to a discussion of Black American music and the relationship between hereditary and learned culture, pointing out how different conditions produced different forms of the music but still the traditional core was there. From there he went on to argue that the religious attitude to music doesn't require change and hence that the different forms of Black music can be easily combined. (He sang an example of bebop melody accompanied by funky rhythm). After the class was an informal rap about some of the 'forgotten geniuses' of Black music in Chicago such as the sax player Nicky Hill.

The students in all the classes were mainly in their middle or late teens (some younger, some older), Black (apart from one) and about equal numbers of each sex. There averaged from 5 to 15 in each class and they ranged from people who were already regularly performing in public to people who had just started playing. A few had professional ambitions, but for most the purpose of the school was to learn more about their culture by directly participating in it.

It is the school more than any other AACM activity that

demonstrates their practical commitment to the community and as such it could be described as the heart of the organisation.

This survey of the history and background has of necessity been kept brief in order to allow emphasis to rest on the remaining sections of this chapter which look at particular issues and aspects of the organisation in much greater detail.

iii) John Shenoy Jackson

John Jackson is probably unique amongst AACM members in that he does not aspire to being a full time professional musician. His profession is social work and he works as a supervisor in the city welfare department. His instrument is the trumpet, but he probably plays less than any other AACM member. Never leading his own groups, most of his playing is in two conventional big bands. He has appeared on record only once (in Joseph Jarman's 'As if it were the Seasons'), and during my stay in Chicago I heard him play only once, with an eight piece group led by Adegoke Steve Colson. On this occasion he displayed a strong brassy sound and a directness in attack which suggested a very adept use of his capabilities, an acute awareness of how his playing would sound to the audience and the ability to make good use of limited solo space. This particular concert suffered from under rehearsal, but Jackson had the strength in himself not to let his personal contribution suffer because of this.

In conversation he is confident and articulate. He speaks slowly, and after 30 years in the north he still has a southern drawl. Occasionally he stops and repeats a phrase for added emphasis - 'Chicago is perhaps the most segregated city in the whole world... in the whole world' - and tempers some of his most grandiose statements with an awareness of the response they might have, implying a wry sort of humour. In a way he treats talking like playing an instrument, manipulating his relationship with the person he is talking to. I say all this because on paper some of his statements might appear pompous, which they actually weren't.

At 52 John Jackson is one of the older members of the AACM but more important than that is the fact that he didn't start playing the trumpet until he was 40. He describes how this came about:

> The way I became involved was that I had certain administrative talents of being able to channel certain efforts in certain directions. A way of

> getting along with people to get them to do what had to be done. I think maybe that is why they took me into the organisation.

His initial approach to the AACM was actually on behalf of his two sons who he hoped would get involved with it.

> After I found out that they only wanted musicians in, out of the instruments that I had purchased for my sons I just picked up the trumpet and tried to get a sound out of it and started playing and was doing quite well.
>
> I knew nothing about music, I came from a rather solid staid family. My father was a sort of no-nonsense type cat. He liked music but he didn't want either my sister or I to become musicians, which we didn't become.
>
> When I bought an instrument for my kids it was a sort of unconscious transference I was making, wanting them to play when I really wanted to play. But I was 40 years old so I decided I figured this is what I want, you know. A friend of mine who I was in college with referred me to Richard Abrams in the AACM, and what I've learned I've picked up from them and various teachers and listening to records, and study, and I made excellent progress I think. And I firmly believe if I'd started when I was a child I'd be one of the giants in the field.

John Jackson grew up in Hot Springs, Arkansas and had a relatively comfortable, trouble free childhood. His father was proprietor of a restaurant and deliberately sheltered John from 'a lot of untoward things'. He was a Marcus Garveyite and very early on gave his son an awareness of race.

> I suppose I knew about the South African situation when I was about 4 or 5 years old. My father didn't wear diamonds because he knew if he wore a diamond some Black family was suffering in Cape Town, South Africa or Durban, South Africa.

He was possibly one of the most marvelleus and ingenieus men I've ever known. I can never equal him I don't think in any way. In fact, right now, I feel totally inadequate when I think about him the time he lived, what he did for us. He was just an unusual man, and I think men like him came along too infrequently. Because I remember other people who I grew up with didn't have strong parents, because the times would not let people be strong, but my Daddy was able to be strong in those times. He wasn't too much of a church-goer - I think my father might have been an agnostic, I don't know, I never did discuss it with him. He would insist that we go to church but I never could pin him down on his different attitudes and concepts about Christianity because he didn't leave room for discussion like that.

He liked to discuss world affairs, politics. I could discuss situations with him that were taboo at our local school. Teachers would shy away from discussing them because they were scared of losing their job.

Now there's no telling what my father would have been if he had just finished high school. But he came up in an unfortunate situation and had to leave home around 12 or 13 years old. He started taking care of himself. I most certainly couldn't have done that at 12 or 13. He came out of Mississippi and he came from a big family too. He was off of a farm - and I'm sure my father didn't just live as good as the type of living he was able to provide for us. So I think what he was doing, what he saw in us was something that he wanted to do when he was a child.

What my father did put, I believe, in my sister and I was the desire to be excellent. Because in our school work, I remember from the time my sister began school work in first grade through twelth grade she never made anything other than an A in any of her courses (she's much smarter than I am). I made As, Bs, Cs, Ds, everything, but she has this thing about excellence so much that it hurt. She's basically a brilliant woman. I have some other things going - sometimes I get mixed up with the wrong crowd, but the fear of my parents

> keeps me straight and I was lucky I didn't get caught with the things I did.

On leaving high school Jackson travelled north to Chicago where he studied at Roosevelt University before and after a spell in the army during the war. Characteristically he manoeuvred himself into a position where he had control of his own records, so that whenever any training came up he simply entered on his card that he had had it already. He only fired a gun once during his 3 years in the army!

His present way of life and attitudes can be largely traced back to his respect for his parents and his consequent feelings of obligation towards his own two children and the future of the Race. He now lives in a racially mixed suburb near the southern city limit, although there tends to be segregation by block even within the neighbourhood. He speaks scornfully of the bourgeois attitudes of his neighbours whilst implying that he shared in some of these attitudes before he joined the AACM. One sign of this is the fitted bar in his room which he used to keep stocked with alcohol but now stands empty. He explained too how he used to have stereo piped into every room in the house and even the backyard. More than anything to John Jackson the AACM is a way of confirming his belief in the traditional family values of the Black community and the music itself is a means of moral and spiritual uplift.

> So in the AACM we're into more than just the music, so our basic thing is to protect our race, protect our Black children, protect our Black boys and girls and to raise them up to be strong and broad-shouldered and proud. This is the undercurrent behind the AACM, this is why we have the school, this is why we go and play free in schools sometimes, go out into the community as I said.
>
> I teach a Sunday school class every Sunday and I'm not basically a religious person. My wife is and I go to the church to contribute as a Sunday school teacher

because I know these kids need an image. Some of those kids who have no fathers, no mothers, some of them are orphans and foster kids but I go there and I smile at them and I let them know that I love them and that's all it takes. I could stay away from church from now on but I'm forgetting my roots. I'm forgetting that Black man and that Black woman who were my mother and father, and I'm forgetting my Black grandparents who scarred their knees up praying for me, whether I believed in their prayers or not. The point is they got down there so I owed them something and this is basically what the AACM is about - what we owe our foreparents, because we wouldn't be where we are if it weren't for them.

The music has opened a new vista of activities for me because I have always been a very competitive person and a very active person and I like to participate in something, but now I devote most of my time to the music and to the AACM.

The block club was getting too bourgeois because they wanted everyone to put up lights at Christmas and then they wanted everyone to get a plastic white Santa Claus with a light in it to put on the line. I guess they have 15 to 20 houses this side and they wanted each to have one. I said - well, I'll compromise, I'll get a Black Santa Claus! - so they said the light won't shine through, so I said - well I won't get anything at all. I was being facetious about a white Santa Claus or a Black one but I was trying to stress a point. What I do at Christmas time is find some unfortunate youngster (and this is what some other people in the AACM do), buy him a pair of winter boots, a good winter coat, a cap, or even buy him some books in school or pay his tuition for sometime. So instead of spending our money frivolously we feel that we should do other things that are more concrete, that are more lasting and are more helpful.

The greatest priority to me is my two sons. And my next priority are young Black people - <u>their</u> children you see, because my sons are grown now. So I think this is where the AACM is coming from. The music is important

> the music is the tide of time and the music is what started it off. But the strength of the music turned our eyes to other things. Now, I know certain types of music I could play and I would never think this way, but the very seriousness of the AACM music has caused me to think this way, and this is what we're trying to do in our schools and things.

John Jackson's values derive basically from his understanding of the tradition of Black people. On all subjects he emphasises the independence of Black culture. For instance he understands that the idea of Black consciousness growing in the 60s was largely a media construction and that in reality the 60s was a time when a feeling and knowledge that had always been there was manifested in a new way. On the subject of musicians he is adamant about the superiority of Black Americans over white Americans. That this is not recognised by the media in the USA he takes as an indication of the power relationships.

> Well it's a sad commentary on the artistic efforts of this country and the artistic atmosphere when the originators of the music - I mean so-called 'jazz' - Black people, Black musicians - have to go to London, England to make a living. So the inequities that minority groups face in this country are across the board in every strain of society. When I think about cats like Duke Ellington not getting his just due. (He might feel he got his just due, but I don't feel he did). You got cats on national television talking about this cat Charles Ives as America's greatest composer; to me that's a sham and a farce, a travesty on justice. I don't think Charles Ives was worthy of tieing Duke Ellington's shoelaces. Now you can quote me on that.
>
> How could Paul Whiteman be the king of jazz when you had cats like Duke Ellington, Louis Armstrong, Andy Kirk around? That's the biggest bullshit you ever heard! And how could Janis Joplin, the dope fiend be the king of the blues with Aretha Franklin there?

He takes his feeling for the tradition of Black Americans further back by comparing the internal structure of the AACM to African societies.

> Muhal, Steve McCall, Fred Anderson and in a sense Malachi Favors. We might be considered the elders. It's set up on the same basis, more or less, as the African culture's set up where elders really - a lot of the youngsters won't even say anything around the elders in the AACM until they're asked to speak. So they respect us so much, so therefore the burden of proof is on me. I have to conduct myself around these fellows. Even on gigs, even on so-called fun occasions, at parties at each other's house. There are certain things I cannot do.....
>
> Most of the older cats if we see one of the younger cats getting round wrong, I mean we question them about it. And he will give us a civil answer, there won't be any friction at all.

As I mentioned at the start of this section John Jackson is unique in his attitudes towards the AACM. He says himself with him it is 50% music and 50% 'social uplift' whereas with some other members it might be 90% music. He is also uniquely important to the organsiation. Since he joined in 1966 it has been he who has held together the administrative functions and he has also been largely responsible for the public face of the organisation (with Muhal Richard Abrams) writing articles, answering letters, making grant applications and so on. He is also one of the few to have remained in Chicago and provided continuity, so whilst his views probably stand at one extreme of the AACM it has been an extreme which was essential to keeping the organisation together and giving it much of its flavour. He has been even more important since 1976 when Muhal Richard Abrams went to live in New York.

iv) Fred Anderson

Fred Anderson is often referred to as a 'living legend' outside Chicago. The younger players in Chicago all speak of him with great respect and he has undoubtedly been a strong influence on many of them. It is difficult to be specific about cause and effect and lines of influence amongst players who are all familiar with each other's work, but it seems to me that in many of the Chicago sax players there are similarities in style and that much of this goes back to Fred. I would include in this both first generation players such as Roscoe Mitchell, Joseph Jarman, Anthony Braxton and Henry Threadgill and also second generation players such as Chico Freeman and Douglas Ewart.

That his influence is largely unacknowledged outside Chicago is due to the fact that in 20 years of playing his own original music, he has travelled little and only recorded twice. Once in 1967 on Joseph Jarman's Song For and once in 1977 with the Austrian group Neighbours while on his first trip outside the USA.[1] While other AACM members have hustled themselves around the world and gradually built up audiences and reputations, Fred has stayed put in Chicago, working steadily at the music he believes in. Sometimes with an audience and sometimes without one. The group that made Song For was actually originally Fred's group, which Joseph joined.

> It came about because I wasn't in a position to lead anything at that time and I didn't have any ambition to lead anything and it just went that way. It wasn't underhanded or anything. At that time I was wrapped up in my family and I was buying this house - I just couldn't deal with that sort of responsibility of leading a group. I formed that group, but it was just that Joseph was more ambitious than me at that time. This is what happens, if a guy is ambitious and he moves, he moves. But I don't have time to think about things like that - my whole thing is to think about playing.

1. Since this was written he has recorded with his own group on the German label, Moers Music.

W.M. Have you ever tried to get a recording deal?

F.A. Well it's strange because sometimes I feel there's a conspiracy against me. Because I get all things - I get write-ups, articles, DownBeat but I never get anybody say 'Hey man, why don't you come over the studio and do a recording'. And I often wonder about this and say 'later' because as I say I don't have time to dwell on that. I have enough stuff to keep on playing because if I get a chance to go in there I just go in. I don't even have to rehearse.

The conspiracy theory is unlikely and certainly wasn't a serious suggestion. It is more likely that the reality of the recording business is that even in an area of minority music such as this the record companies are likely to go for the more ambitious musician who is going to push the music out and of course stimulate record sales. There have been two Chicago companies that did record AACM music in the 60s, Delmark and Nessa and certainly Bob Koester and Chuck Nessa who ran them were convinced that the music was going to become more popular. More than that Koester was sure of the music's historical importance. He didn't actually like the music himself but said that his reasons for recording it were that he felt it was his only chance of doing something on the level of Earl Hines or Jelly Roll Morton or Louis Armstrong. However Fred Anderson does know both Koester and Nessa personally and it does seem slightly surprising that neither have recorded him.

In a city that is renowned for its 'meat and potatoes' attitudes Anderson also displays this preference in his own actions. He has never dressed his music up for the audience, never over-arranged it, and insists on always keeping an open minded attitude to what might happen on the bandstand.

You have to... because if you don't you're going to be out of it. You can't come with no preconceived ideas about how it's going to sound because you could be bugged all night long. You can't be arguing and hollering on the bandstand so you have to

> make it work. However it goes. So you have an attitude about the stuff as it is not about how you think it should be at a particular time. You have to deal with it at that moment, and that's sort of what keeps you going. To me that's what you call creativity - to be able to deal with the stuff right at the moment it happens; to ride with it - take it wherever it's going to go - not to try and force it when it's not going to go that way.
>
> I'll tell you one thing. I don't like repetition too much. This is one of the reasons why it's hard for me to - you see most cats they rehearse and they leave no room for creativity. They rehearse the stuff and when they get to play it, it has to go down. But I don't rehearse stuff like that - I rehearse stuff just for a frame and then it moves. Every time we play a tune it comes out different. We may play the line pretty much the same, but I'm talking about in between things. We change a little stuff. A lot of guys call themselves creative musicians - I'm not trying to down anybody but all these people I hear are just waving a flag, you dig?

Fred had one of the first groups in Chicago to play free jazz in 1961 when he led a quartet with Billy Brimfield on trumpet (who is still in his group), Bill Fletcher and Bernard Thomas. His playing, he says, was basically the same then as it is now and he was even using some of the same material. His tune, 'Little Fox Run' for instance was written at that time, he recorded it with Joseph Jarman in 1967 and it is still in his present reperteire. Another case of meat and potatoes; he writes a tune for a particular emotional and musical purpose, and it continues to fulfill that purpose for at least 18 years.

He arrived at his musical conception independently of the well known innovators such as Ornette Coleman.

> I've always played like this before I'd even heard Ornette. I'd go round and folks would say 'Man, what is this cat playing?'

> I'd get put off bandstands and shit like that.
>
> ... So I was just playing that way even though I hadn't written anything down but my playing was different. I'd never like copied solos off the record or anything like that. I could listen and I could hear what was happening and maybe I could take bits and pieces, you know, after I heard it and fit it in my own way, or maybe I'd be practising some exercises and suddenly I would play something unconsciously that would sound like something on a record, so it was just the way the music absorbed inside me so it just came out natural....
>
> My whole thing is dealing with the scales and chords - the same thing they were dealing with. You deal with the tools and you have to figure out how to use them to your best advantage.

Fred's main concern has been to deal with the 'tools' over a long period of time.

> I married when I was 21 (he is now 48) and I started dealing with that scene at that time and was very consistent with it, you know that 9 to 5 thing trying to make ends meet, and in the meantime I was very consistent with practising. That's one of the main things. You don't have to do a whole lot, just a little bit a day. The thing about the stuff is don't worry about it, you let it go. Day by day. You get up and go to work every day - it's the same. So I learned that from just living an ordinary life. I mean musicians shouldn't be no different from nobody else - he's got to eat, sleep - he has families and stuff like that whether he's doing music full-time or part-time.
>
> Most musicians I know are possibly not as serious as I am and they've got all the time in the world. And maybe they haven't even accomplished as much as I have as far as getting into myself; and I think that's one of the main things - getting into yourself and finding out really what you can do, and all your potential. I think a lot of guys they have so much time they don't really explore their potential because they're too busy doing other things and they <u>waste</u> a lot of time.

Being one of the elder members of the AACM Fred sees himself as being something of a restraining influence, a guardian of the tradition. This in spite of the radical nature of his music in 1960, and his emphasis on spontaneity and openmindedness on the bandstand. He has a lasting admiration for the masters of the tradition especially Charlie Parker and Lester Young and feels some of the younger musicians could learn from listening to them. As Joseph Jarman pointed out, in the 50s it was natural for young musicians to listen to the past masters since the whole culture was surrounding them, but this is no longer the case.

> We had a lot of younger musicians who didn't know nothing but AACM who hadn't come up through the ranks of the older musicians had never listened to it and had never tried to play some of the bebop tunes.....
>
> But I was listening to Bird, Lester and Dexter and I knew that they were always playing stuff different all the time, you know.... I suppose we had enough guys like Richard and myself who had kept an anchor on the stuff because you had these guys who thought they were revolutionary and doing something different - and they've got a a right but we should always try and understand the history of the music so that we can contribute to it.
>
> You see I never thought the music was supposed to be a certain way, I always thought it was supposed to be like an extension. You could take any music and get away from the basic roots of what went on before or you can take it and try and deal with the roots and try to extend it.... I think that's what Diz and them did. They took Armstrong and stuff and played very traditionally and all of a sudden they decided they wanted to go someplace else, but they went very, very logically. It wasn't radical, they were using the same rhythm but making it a little more exciting.
>
> They had that basic concept and that's what I'm always looking for in playing this music. Some of the stuff,I do has classical stuff in it - I mean Bird used that but he figured out how he could make it sound good - like an extension. So I don't have all the answers - so I'm trying to play this music so it can be related to the

> bebop thing - the bebop thing was so good man - it's really hard for me - there's no way - I mean musically they covered all the stuff. Rhythmically I'm trying to deal with it, and the harmony, but it's very hard for me to pin the stuff down because I'm still searching and I won't say at this day and time there's going to be something that comes up and makes an imprint on art like Diz and Bird did. It was a rare time.

Having such strong beliefs about the value of the jazz tradition Anderson has also tried to pass his knowledge on. This he has done mainly through playing with younger saxophonists in his band, for instance Chico Freeman and Douglas Ewart. He has never actually taught a class at the AACM school since he thinks the best education comes in actually playing.

> These cats are not thinking about their instrument. They're thinking of just picking up their instrument and playing some notes but not getting right inside of it... I think it all has to do with sound and as soon as you get a good sound you can learn to speak.. But I don't know if you can get this across. All music is basically the same, but what makes it different is different cats have different ways of speaking and communicating.
>
> The main thing that I hear now is that a lot of horn players are not dealing with the air, not controlling the flow of air, and it limits them. It's a physical thing. It's how much time you spend playing and developing strength and stamina. You just develop the whole concept and apply it at the same time. It's a lot of things, not just one thing, maybe 5,6,7,8,9,10 things that have to be done naturally. You have to figure out how you can do these things but not think about it. What I heard in Bird wasn't just the technique but I heard the way he was doing these things. He wasn't putting the air into the horn like the ordinary cat because he was sounding so much clearer so he couldn't have been doing it. He had so much control, he was strong all over. He was as strong at the beginning of the phrase as at the end. So all this has to mean something. A lot of cats are listening and they don't hear this. He always made a statement, he always knew where it was at you know.

. . . . . .

> I was into sound a long time ago and I found that you have to constantly work on it or else you lose it. The sound is most important - this is what makes your stuff sound the same all the time and you constantly try and go beyond it. Sound is about 90% of playing - technique is important and reading is part of it, but until you get the sound, nothing.

Fred's music is based on what he considers a strong relationship with his instrument and a strong relationship with the jazz tradition. This makes a basis for building communication within the group and with an audience. He is critical of young players who are willing to play in public without this sort of preparation and proposed the example of the two sax players Sonny Stitt and Gene Ammons as being two distinctive players who were able to complement each other and communicate.

> Say for instance if you hear a guy run something on a whole tone scale, well you hear it - you know what that is and you can run something similar to it. But if you've got some guy who's not familiar with these things, then it's not going to work. You're not going to complement each other and it's very strained.
>
> I think the audience is aware of this. I think a lot of the young musicians don't understand that the audience is listening. Although they're not musicians, they're listening and they can hear what's happening. They may not be able to tell you the technical things, but they know when the communication is going.

Living in Evanston, a northern suburb of Chicago, Fred has actually remained fairly separate from much of the Chicago music scene. Recently he has invested most of his time and money in his own club, called <u>The Birdhouse</u> (named after Charlie Parker) which is situated on Lincoln Avenue about 6 miles north of the Loop. This is a project that one might have expected the AACM as a whole to do (and at certain stages they have tried), but ironically it has only been possible for the necessary funds to be provided by one man and not the collective. Fred had been planning something of this kind for several years as part of his

means for continuing his musical work at a serious level. The opportunity came in 1977 when he made his first trip to Europe. He and Billy Brimfield were invited to do a concert tour of Austria and Germany by the Austrian group Neighbours. This was the first time he had ever made any surplus money from playing and since his children had by them all grown up and left home he was free to invest the money in the Birdhouse.

He was also partly inspired by seeing many successful small clubs in Europe and speaks of how he 'realised how impertant the stuff is'. A further inspiration was playing to larger audiences in Europe and typically he speaks of the dangers of letting the standard slip under these conditions.

> The music is here and this is where you play the music the best. I don't know why. You play it best here because you love it, not because a lot of people come to see you. Over there you get these audiences, and if you're not careful you get into a thing because you take everything for granted because the people are there and if you're not really careful you find yourself slacking up on your stuff. You're performing some of the same material all the time because you're in different places all the time and you find you're not playing your best all the time.

But Anderson was speaking about more regular travellers when he spoke of these dangers because in his own case the opposite happened!

> Now when I was over there it was like this. I was so used to playing for 2 or 3 or 4 or 10 people so when I got a chance to play for a lot of people I felt very, very good, so I think that in itself makes you feel good. You play the same, but it makes you that much more enthusiastic because you feel the people. So this is the thing that I think made the tour successful because I was playing my best at all times. I never did slack up on the stuff and I was always trying to change things and do different things.

This is apparently the first time that a venture of this sort has been tried in Chicago. At various times in the past the AACM has had regular use of places such as the wholefood store 'Transitions East' and in New York there are many places run by musicians (usually known as lofts, although most of them aren't).

Fred Anderson faces numerous problems in attempting this; legal as well as financial. After two false starts and skirmishes with the city authorities when it was closed down for not having the correct licences the Birdhouse is now putting on at least three concerts a week. Fred is confident of his relationship with City Hall and puts down the early mistakes to his complete inexperience with the legal system. His main aim is to at least ensure that the Birdhouse stays open for a year to enable him then to assess its potential for carrying on. After that time he will be eligible to apply to the Illinois Arts Council for a grant and he is determined that in the long term the Birdhouse shouldn't be a drain on his financial resources.

The financial problems are firstly those of setting up the place - paying the rent, buying chairs, lights, sound equipment, heating (which has to be left on all the time in the winter), legal fees - and secondly, providing enough income from audiences to pay the musicians adequately. This is actually a fair problem because not being licensed for selling alcohol Anderson is not able to run on a similar economic basis to a normal jazz club where the sale of drinks is the main income. All his income has to come from the $3 admission price.

His musical policy is to alternate his own group with other Chicago groups, not just AACM but including them, and during the time I was there the bands included three AACM or connected groups (Quadrisect, Adegoke ensemble and Thurman Barker group), the tenor player Von Freeman and a group called the Mandingo Griot Society which includes African as well as American musicians.

He has been given excellent support by the local press - many articles and interviews have appeared, but audiences, particularly through the winter period seemed to fluctuate a lot.

When I left Chicago in December 1977 Fred was exploring other ways of increasing the income of the Birdhouse, maybe by selling books and records, and was cautiously optimistic about the future. However I heard a year later that he never managed to obtain the correct licence from the city because of zoning laws and the club closed down in the summer of 1978.

From a personal point of view things started to look up a bit for Fred. He was invited to take part in the prestigious Moers festival in Germany in 1978 and returned there in 1979 and he is beginning to become better known, if very belatedly.

Fred, then, is concerned almost exclusively with the music. In terms of John Jackson's percentage ratings he would definitely be one of the 90% people and not 50%. And yet, the firmness of his musical philosophy has made him a strong influence on many of the younger players and his project with the Birdhouse was a very tangible example of his contribution to the overall scene. His conversation, especially when compared to Jackson's, always seems to revolve around the music itself, and the social aspect of his thought is revealed only through the attitudes which he expects musicians to have towards their music and its history, and through his ideas of the correct musical relationships amongst players and between the players and their audience. Above all one could say that he is concerned with attaining an <u>honesty</u> in all these relationships. No musical flag-waving. Just straightforward, serious music performed sincerely for an audience and combining a solid knowledge of the tradition with a high level of creativity and spontaneity.

v) A.A.C.M. Music

The two sections preceding this, although biographical in form, were intended primarily to exemplify the two dominant aims which pervade the activities of the AACM. In this section I want to look closely at some AACM music and see to what extent the music is compatible with these aims and to what extent it actually expresses them. I will do this by looking at the specific social meanings that are communicated by the music.

I should note before I start that several of the members have claimed that there is no such thing as 'AACM music', there is only music made by particular members. Whilst acknowledging the ultimate uniqueness of every individual I would maintain, with many other commentators, that there are clearly recognisable similarities between many of the AACM groups and that these are significant rather than trivial. The Austrian writer Ekkehard Jost has perhaps expressed this most strongly, when he wrote in 1974:

> There is hardly any other group of individuals in free jazz that is so tightly enclosed by a classification as those Chicago musicians who banded together in the mid-Sixties under the heading of the Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians (AACM) and who later in several formations - the most outstanding of which was the Art Ensemble of Chicago - spread throughout the world the tidings of a new kind of Chicago jazz.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> When we speak of Chicago free jazz, then, we not only have to describe a certain group of musicians and a certain kind of music, but also an interdependence of social and musical factors to which that music owes its individual status within the stylistic conglomerate of free jazz.
>
> E. Jost, Free Jazz, p.163.

In examining this notion I will concentrate particularly on the music of the Art Ensemble of Chicago and related groups and will

show how, as I outlined in general terms in Chapter two, the musical content and the social and cultural context of the music combine to give it its specific social meaning.

I start off by describing how the typical musical form of a jazz piece evolved from the 1920s onwards and how by the late 1950s certain problems were evident in the form which had now become a formula. The problems were mixed in nature, but nevertheless they could be expressed in terms of the contradiction of an over-emphasis on individual expression in a form that is essentially collective, and thus were problems of social meaning as well. I then describe how three major innovators of the early 1960s, Ornette Coleman, Cecil Taylor and John Coltrane solved these problems in ways that were very personal yet shared the fact of adopting the stance of uncompromising committed artists. In contrast to this I show how the music of the Art Ensemble was actually based on a different stance that didn't accept the division between the roles of artist and entertainer but thrived on their combination. However, rather than being radically new, I show how this stance is actually a true reflection of the developing racial relationships in the USA and how it can be understood clearly in terms of jazz history. The stance too has enabled the music to carry social and political meanings which are relevant both to the American Black community and to the world-wide jazz community.

In Chapter one I spoke of jazz as an idiom which contains within itself forces which lead to a particularly high rate of innovation and musical development. I also implied that the new jazz of any particular period is in a certain sense non-idiomatic and free, until the nature of the idiom itself changes to include it. For this reason jazz was considered to be a special sort of idiomatic improvisation and not typical, since innovation is actually part of the idiom.

From the 20s through to the late 50s the innovative drive caused the music (with a few exceptions) to develop towards individualism at the expense of collectivism. Innovative improvisors tended towards playing larger solos with less accompaniment, the typical form being a wind instrument accompanied by piano, bass and drums. Certainly by the mid 40s soloists were finding that the only way they could make a statement that was both emotionally intense and personal was by following this path. As a corollary of this the backing riff played by wind instruments almost totally disappeared from the music.

By the mid-50s small group jazz had arrived at a formula by which musicians took it in turns to exhibit their individual creativity. Each piece would start with a statement of the theme, normally in a standard form of 32 bars or 12 bars. This would be followed by improvised solos by each wind instrument accompanied by piano, bass and drums, melodically free but based on the harmonic structure of the theme. Then a piano solo. Then either a bass solo or a drum solo or both, or else the drums 'swapping fours' with the horns (i.e. playing four bars each in turn), followed by an exact restatement of the theme.

The task for the improvisor was to play as interestingly as possible within the limits of this form. Hierarchically speaking there would be a kind of rotating leadership in the group. Each player would function as musical leader during his own solo, directing the overall flow and rise and fall of the music. The role of the rhythm section was subsidiary in a sense, but crucial. They had to not only provide a sympathetic accompaniment for each successive soloist but also provide some sort of continuity between solos so as to give a feeling of unity to the whole piece.

As solos gradually became larger and tended towards more complete statements in themselves continuity between solos became more and more difficult. Looking back on this music it is clear that the formula that had been arrived at for coping with the duality of strong individual statements and a collective statement had become

inadequate. To understand this it is necessary to look at the form in detail from the point of view of both performer and listener.

From the performers' point of view, the question is to what extent they are trying to make a unified coherent piece of music and to what extent they are trying to express their individual personalities. The obvious answer is that they are trying to do both, but within the form these aims may be contradictory. For the first soloist it is easy enough. The theme has been played, usually in a fairly neutral way and the soloist is able to build up his solo in whatever way he chooses making his own interpretation and development of the harmony, melody and rhythm of the theme, either maintaining its general feeling or changing it. But there is a problem. Although he can create certain expectations and tensions for the listener he can't actually resolve them all. because the music will continue after he stops. There are major elements of continuity in that the pulse remains the same and the harmonic structure is repeated, so even if the solo has seemed complete in itself it will still form part of a larger structure.

The problem for the second soloist, which is especially acute if the first solo has been long and wideranging, is how to improvise on the same structure without sounding like a repeat of the first solo, and yet still retain some emotional continuity with it. Of course, there are plenty of ways of doing this, especially with sympathetic accompanists who are aware of the need for both continuity and contrast, but ultimately all the ways are formulas which become exhausted. The sorts of approaches the second soloist can take would include:

1. Ignoring the first solo and taking the theme as the starting point for his solo.
2. Leaving a gap and allowing the feeling of the first solo to subside.
3. Developing his solo from the last few phrases of the first solo.
4. Making an abrupt change with a new idea stated very strongly immediately.

All of these have obvious drawbacks.

From the point of view of the listener the transition between solos can be a problem too. If one has followed the first solo closely and enjoyed it, it can be difficult to adapt one's listening to a different sort of musical thinking. One is bound to place the new solo in the context of the first, which may not be actually relevant. At the very least it is likely that there will be a lull in the emotional intensity of the music at this point so it can seem frustrating.

However, it is possible to make too much of this weakness in the form since it derives partly from an abstract analysis away from the social context of the music. Although I have been personally aware of this weakness as causing an element of dissatisfaction in listening to this form of the music for a considerable time, I would also like to point out some of the factors that alleviate this in an actual performance.

1. Most groups are made up of musicians who are musically sympathetic to each other and will be aware of the whole music as well as their own contribution.
2. Most experienced listeners are aware of the problem and will not expect each piece played by the group to sound complete in itself. They will listen to the music over a whole evening and will place each solo in the context of other pieces as well as the immediate context of the piece. On a still larger timescale many listeners will relate the solos to previous performances by the same musician and will be listening to a developing life's work.
3. Jazz most often happens in informal situations such as bars and clubs, and in this setting the listener is prepared to accept weaknesses in form because of the directness of the communication and anticipation of the spontaneity of the improvisation. Also the listener will have different expectations of a pick-up group or jam

session than of a regular working band.

4. The listener might have a drink, light a cigarette or talk during the transition.

These factors not withstanding, it is clear that this was a real problem simply from the fact that the innovating musicians of the early 60s all found new ways of resolving it.

There were many different sorts of innovation that were made in 1960s jazz but it is these fundamental formal ones that I want to concentrate on in a brief discussion of Ornette Coleman, John Coltrane and Cecil Taylor and then a larger discussion of the Art Ensemble of Chicago.

Ornette Coleman first recorded in 1958. His most important innovation for our purposes was the abolition of the chorus as a formal structure. That is to say that improvisation was no longer based on a repeated harmonic pattern but took the form of freely developing melody, based partly on the theme and partly on spontaneous ideas. This allowed for a more creative contribution from the bass and drums (there was no piano). Whilst they still played a steady pulse, without the constriction of a chorus structure there was much more scope for them to change the beat and tonality and respond to the alto sax of Coleman or the trumpet of Don Cherry. The overall sequence of events was still the same. There was a theme, but because of the different relationship between the parts the group arrived at a more flexible form which allowed for greater interaction and collectivity between the players. (A comprehensive account of the music of Ornette Coleman is given by Jost, Chapter 3 which includes an analysis of all the methods by which Coleman enriched the form and gave it a new spontaneity.)

Cecil Taylor took a totally different approach. His records

made in the early 60s show a complete rejection of the theme, solos, theme form and he developed a much more complex way of relating themes and improvisation within a piece. He does this by several methods. Firstly there are often several themes in one piece which may occur at the beginning, middle or end. The improvising is generally directed to specified musical ends and fits into an overall scheme. In this sense it can't really be described as free. Secondly, the improvisation can't be described as solos because Taylor himself plays such an active role in accompanying a sax solo on the piano. Rather than supporting he pushes, so each solo becomes a duet with the piano. In this way he places his stamp on the whole music and although increasing the intensity and collectivity in some ways he actually reduces the reciprocity by forcing a particular type of collective relationship on the other players. Thirdly, the regular jazz beat is replaced by a fast series of pulses by the drums and cymbals which can't be reduced to any simple pattern. While this stops the music swinging in a traditional sense it actually allows great surges of energy to drive the music forward and increases the presence and newness of the music. Performances in clubs were often more than an hour long and enabled enormous arcs of tension to be built up and resolved. The very intensity of the music diminished the significance of the inter-personal problem. Fourthly, themes were often played loosely in a way that enabled them to flow in and out of the improvisation in a natural sounding way.

John Coltrane too worked towards making enormous and intense emotional statements with his music. Especially during the last three years of his life between 1964 and 1967 the music was pulled together by a strong religious feeling with great depth and intensity in the actual sound. Technically Coltrane was an unsurpassed virtuoso on the tenor saxophone and whether playing with a quartet of piano, bass and drums or with larger groups the improvisation of successive soloists rode along on the wave of the drum pulse providing a steady flow of energy. Formally the music was less complex than Taylor's often being based on

very simple modal themes which were then broken away from, but this allowed greater scope for the improvisors to make their own statements. Solos often dovetailed or developed out of phrases improvised as background for previous solos. A clear illustration of the close link between the musical form and the interpersonal relationship is the transitional record 'Live in Seattle'. On this Coltrane is trying to get the same collective emotional sound from conventional 32 bar tunes and the uneasy feeling of transitions between solos is very obvious.

These three musicians form part of the cultural context for the music that developed in the AACM. To generalise, all three (and this applies to much other new music of the period) based their music on a much broadened scope for the individual improviser to make an exhaustive emotional statement, at the same time as allowing the whole group to improvise together much more creatively and collectively, freed from the formulas for playing together of 50s jazz. In this way they took the music on to a new level that was both individually and collectively more satisfying.

However, for audiences it wasn't as simple as this. Listening to this new music made very heavy demands on you. It demanded your commitment as a listener in a way that much older jazz hadn't. Although offering potentially higher rewards in terms of emotional satisfaction these were only there if you went with the music all the way. Audiences interpreted the music in different ways. For some its intensity was synonymous with hate and aggression. Some saw it as symbolising the triumph of Black Power. Others saw it as an exploration into the expression of much more intense musical emotions and there were fierce battles in the jazz press about what the music actually was about. It is now clear, from the way the music has developed since then, that there was a close relationship between the new jazz and the developing Black consciousness in the USA.

The two most extended expositions on this subject, by Kofsky and by Carles and Commolli, were in the first case crude in argument and in the second case in French (the international jazz language being English), so the nature of the relationship has not been understood by many of the listeners.

However, in whatever way the audiences chose to interpret the meaning of the music, (and by no means all of its supporters supported it for the same reasons) the actual practical stance of the musicians at work was unmistakable. It was that of dead serious commitment to their art. The artist pushing himself to the extremes of his expressive capabilities. I mentioned above how the social circumstances of a performance alleviated the structural weakness of jazz based on a string of solos (50s jazz). For the new jazz the position was almost reversed. If you did indulge in the social activities associated with jazz clubs (drinking, talking, etc.,) you were likely to lose the thread of the music and find it battering at your head. If you relegated this new music to background noise it was so intense that it would sound annoying. The only way to cope with it was to listen to it. This, I presume, is what Buell Neidlinger was getting at when he observed that Cecil Taylor's music paralyses people's brains (see page 94).

Stance (The Art Ensemble of Chicago)

This question of stance is crucial when we come to consider the development to AACM music. I said that the aims of the AACM amounted to a desire to redefine totally the relationships with their audience and community. This entailed a fundamental change in their musical stance and one of the first steps they took was to move the music out of bars and clubs into small concert halls. Actually, it was an unavoidable step since the bars didn't want them, but it caused some dissatisfaction amongst observers of the scene. Traditionally musicians had to work

their way up through the club scene before they were popular enough to make concerts economically viable. In other words there had to be a lot of people who were willing to just sit there and listen to them. But in the AACM, here were young, almost unknown musicians apparently ignoring the economics and, in the eyes of some of the older musicians, trying to run before they could walk. Some listeners felt unhappy about the way the music is imposed on the audience at a concert. An interesting example of this is Bob Koester, who was the first man to record AACM music on his Delmark label (which up until then had specialised in blues):

> I don't really like AACM concerts because they make such a religion out of silence. I feel so bad about walking out which I have to do fairly frequently. I prefer ordinary music really - just blues in a bar or something. It doesn't have to be that good for me to enjoy it because you can always take a large or small dose of it as you desire. If it gets too boring you can have a drink or talk or go somewhere else. You have so much more control over things.

It was, in fact, specifically this control that the AACM sought and it could only be achieved in a concert situation, because artistic control of the music implied control of the audience too. In a sense, then, the move into concerts can be seen to have had an alienating effect, separating performers from audience rather than bringing them together, and in this sense might be considered contrary to AACM aims. However, if the actual content of the concerts is taken into account the relationship becomes more complex.

When I described the concert at the beginning of the Chicago section I mentioned the ambiguity of Kahil El'Zabar's spoken announcement. This is a feeling that runs through much of the early work of the AACM, particularly the groups associated with Roscoe Mitchell that eventually became the Art Ensemble of Chicago (an ambiguously ironic name in itself). It was, indeed,

partly this that distinguished AACM music from the free jazz of the early 60s. The ambiguity formed the basis of a more complex stance which consequently provided more flexibility in the ways the music could be listened to. This meant that what was apparently a move towards a more serious 'artistic' stance as a linear development from the early 1960s, actually introduced new elements which changed the stance laterally.

The first AACM record to be issued, Sound by the Roscoe Mitchell Sextet, although transitional, has one concise example of the way the music was going to develop. This is The Little Suite by Roscoe Mitchell.

> The piece starts with a wistful, bluesy sounding phrase played by harmonica and bass in unison with percussion scratching and scraping, followed by three long notes and trills with the recorder added. Then a very short collective improvisation by muted trumpet, cello (plucked) and snare drum leads into a corny march rhythm, the customary roots and fifths bass line being played jauntily by the trumpet. A quick reference to the Wizard of Oz ('We're off to see the wizard...') and suddenly before there's a chance for it to get too absurd, it's into an intense free improvisation with loud distorted saxophone notes and energetic drumming. This soon gives way to an almost in unison passage by recorder and bowed bass, that, because of the thinness of the recorder's tone, sounds almost like an exercise. Then back to a repeat of the first bluesy phrase.and a short improvisation by harmonica, bass, cello and drums. Then a trumpet improvisation using many of the vocalized and guttural techniques of traditional jazz with occasional interjections by saxes. After a short bugle call phrase on harmonica comes an intense collective improvisation, including shouting as well as instrumental sounds. A short interlude by the alto playing a lyrical development of the recorder/bass theme, then another burst of collective improvisation and the piece finishes with a repeat of the first theme.

The Little Suite lasted 10½ minutes altogether. No one section of it is longer than about a minute, so the impression is of

continual change and about turns in the music, in a sense the opposite of the long intense improvisations of John Coltrane. In terms of listening, the effect is that whenever you begin to feel you know what's happening it takes another twist and slips away from you again. Many of the elements used are ones that in isolation would seem trite or meaningless. It is only the context that makes them significant. Thus, the music calls for a very sophisticated knowledgeable listener to be able to appreciate fully the significance of all the changes and turns. A 'naive' listener would probably be very puzzled by the piece as a whole, but there is plenty of scope for enjoyment of details and for some people this could provide a way into the music. A full appreciation isn't necessarily required.

The Little Suite may seem a long way from my earlier description of the jazz idiom in Chapter one, involving as it does a radical transformation of some of the elements I claimed were basic to the tradition, most notably rhythm and spontaneity. But in both cases the way they are transformed makes for an increase in collectivity and in this sense the music is taken back to its earlier roots.

As regards rhythm, The Little Suite never swings in the traditional sense. When there is a regular pulse it is a corny march beat, and at other times the percussion plays a colouristic role, working with sound and tone colour rather than rhythm. Only during the short periods of intense collective improvisation do the drums provide rhythmic momentum. Otherwise the rhythm tends towards understatement and the normal intensity is not present. However, many of the other instruments imply and use jazz rhythm in the way they shape their phrases and the effect is an equalisation of roles whereby the responsibilities for rhythm and tone colour are shared around the band. An exceptionally wide range of sounds and rhythms is heard within the space of ten minutes.

A different sort of intensity comes from the very alert collective interplay between the musicians, which brings me onto the question of spontaneity. The piece is mapped out by Mitchell as a composer, and because each section is so short it means that there is very little scope for spontaneity except in the very small details. There is no possibility for the musicians to take the music off in any direction they like. However, because it is so revolutionary in form and because each detail sounds alert and spontaneous it sounds spontaneous overall, even though one is aware that it must have been substantially pre-structured. The musicians play it with conviction and by the end of the piece a feeling of a very devious sort of unity is achieved out of the fragments.

It is obviously basically Mitchell's concept (as composer/ improviser) that is being explored and this is what I meant by saying the music was transitional. In this case Mitchell has directed a new kind of collective relationship, but it can be seen as a concentrated prototype for a form in which the collective could evolve into an even richer form where contributions from other musicians may carry as much weight as those of Mitchell. This is demonstrated by two records from the following year, (Numbers 1 and 2, Old/Quartet), which include much longer pieces that are based on the same sort of pluralistic structure and allow a much greater scope for spontaneity by all the members of the band. In fact, Quartet is a 38 minute piece that is completely improvised but still makes musical reference to structures and themes used by the group in other contexts. It seems feasible to say that the concentrated structure of The Little Suite was a necessary stage in developing the collectivity that was emerging, as a way of ensuring musicians oriented their playing towards the growing music as opposed to individual expression.

Summarising, the important developments were, firstly, that there were no extended improvised solos or individual expressions; secondly, that the whole was made up from an extremely contrasting selection of parts, sometimes subtly and sometimes abruptly inter-related; thirdly, that the musical stance of the musicians changed several times within one piece (in its simplest form, some bits were serious and other bits were silly); and fourthly that the musical and implied social relationships between the musicians were continually changing. And of course these four together totally abolished the problem of the transition between solos that had been only temporarily solved by the early 60s innovators.

Overall, the freedom of the music was increased because a structure had been created whereby anything (musical or non-musical, form or sound) could be brought into it. And it could all be coped with by the musicians implying varying stances towards what they were doing. A method of distancing had been developed which meant that no longer must every sound that was made be taken at face value as a serious personal or collective expression; it must be questioned, placed in its context musically and historically. The change may be shown by an imaginary example: John Coltrane would, I think, simply have felt silly or embarrassed playing 'We're off to see the wizard...' whereas the Mitchell group actually enjoy doing something that seems silly and using it as a way of relating their music to its context. Mitchell has referred to this as 'emotional counterpoint'. (Of course Coltrane <u>did</u> play <u>My Favourite Things</u> which is probably just as trite as 'We're off to see the wizard...', but he completely transformed it rhythmically and harmonically and thus negated its triteness). In this way the music was given a new set of complexity and depth. We can see now that Wilfrid Mellers was being too narrowly musicological when he implied that a complex collective music could only be made by sheer instrumental virtuosity (see page 29)

How does the listener relate to this sort of music? First of all the variation in stance prompts the listener to enter the mind of the musician, because although in a few cases the stance is clear there are many more cases when it isn't. It is often ambiguous. And then it is necessary as a listener to think 'Why exactly is he doing that?' Is it meant to sound funny or is it a serious reference to the past? Or do they just like the sound of it anyway?' And very often the answer isn't at all obvious, as is shown by audience reactions to concerts by the present Art Ensemble of Chicago. Different people find different bits funny. (This was the case at concerts I attended by the group in both Ann Arbor, Michigan and London).

The listener is prompted to extend this questioning attitude to other aspects of the music too. For example the group relations. If a solo is obscured by other instruments, is this meant to represent the repression of an individual or is it meant to be a logical development in the music, or is it a mistake?

The end result of all this is to give the listener many more ways into the music, and the creative act of imagining what it feels like to be playing the music serves to bring the audience closer to the performers. Moreover, it has the potential, at least, to form the basis of a new sort of relationship with the community that transcends the static ones of both the Blues of Teresa's and the classic 'art' relationship.

This potentially very different relationship between musicians and audience is one clear aspect of the social meaning of the Art Ensemble's music and it also provided a structure by means of which the political content of the music could be increased and better understood.

I have already said that the music was becoming more collective which has obvious political implications, and I also said that its freedom was increased by the fact that the form as it was

developing allowed anything to be brought into it. The choice of specifically what was brought into the music was a further avenue by which political meanings could be expressed, and thus would also have a strong effect on the developing community relationships that I mentioned above.

Gradually, the choice went in the direction of bringing in more and more musical references to earlier forms of Black music and also various traditional ethnic musics, with particular emphasis given to African musics. Additionally three of the group Joseph Jarman, Malachi Favors and Don Moye (after he joined the group in 1970) began wearing African costumes and face paint on stage. (Lester Bowie adopted a white doctor's coat as his stage-wear and Roscoe Mitchell dressed 'normally' in trousers and shirt). Also they began to use African instruments such as the balaphone and drums. In a sense, then, they began to present a synthesis of the cultural history of Black Americans. They actually adopted a slogan to describe this: 'Great Black Music - Ancient to the Future'. Of course this wasn't the first time that musicians had re-created the Black music of the past but it was the first time that it had been integrated into a complete musical performance. For example, on the one hand are the blues musicians of Teresa's faithfully re-creating old music for the original audience, or at least a similar one; on the other hand are some of the contemporary white dixieland musicians who have taken traditional jazz into the commercial entertainment arena.

A third example is the faithful reproduction of so-called 'jazz classics' as works of art by contemporary musicians. The New York JazzRepertory Company has done this with many composers, and in England the Alan Cohen band has done the same. These are all different from the way the Art Ensemble does it because the latter bring very original re-interpretations of older forms into their music and thus bring the forms back to life by avoiding over reverence to the past. Sometimes they will do a whole piece in this way such as the extended rhythm and blues number

Bye Bye Baby on the record Certain Blacks or Old on Old/Quartet. At other times they incorporate traditional stylistic elements into free improvisations such as the whole language of vocalised trumpet playing which Lester Bowie uses expertly.

That they were able to do this was not just a matter of the music itself but was also partly due to their ability to adopt and adapt different social roles. Specifically they were able to combine the roles of entertainer and artist and thus question the historical development from the former to the latter. In fact, this historical development had always carried some ambiguity since although it indicated an advance in equality for Blacks it also implied a Europeanisation in terms of social roles. The Art Ensemble were able to emphasise this ambiguity by actually incorporating it into their performance.

Before I expand on this it is necessary to look at the notion of Black entertainer as it existed in America. Marshall Stearns gives an insightful discussion of this in his book The Story of Jazz.

In terms of the white audience for ealy jazz, he argues, Black musicians were in general wearing masks. They were doing what was expected of them by whites. In other words they were playing the part of happy-go-lucky nigger minstrels enjoying the innocent pleasures of music-making. At other times they were portraying the idea of the noble savage, straight out of the jungle. The music Duke Ellington played for white audiences at the Cotton Club in Harlem was actually given the title 'jungle music'. But this 'entertainment for whites' role of the jazz musician co-existed with a more direct relationship with Black audiences where no mask was required.

The dual role has been an economic necessity, since only by

appealing to the more affluent white audiences were musicians able to survive in the long term. As I mentioned in connection with Leroi Jones' arguments in Chapter one, jazz has always been a Black music carrying within it the tension of being for white as well as Black audiences.

Marshall Stearns portrays the history of jazz as a progressive slipping of the mask, or a gradual increase in the number of occasions when the mask need not be worn. The jazzman's mask, he argues, had its roots in the minstrel shows of the 19th century and was only adopted by New Orleans musicians when they started branching out to play to wider audiences. However, gradually the mask was allowed to slip.

> Wherever jazz found an appreciative audience that would support it, the mask became less necessary. For many years, such an audience could only be found among the poorer Negroes, but the picture gradually changed. The high-points can be suggested: New Orleans at the turn of the century; St. Louis and Memphis in the 'teens; Chicago in the 'twenties; Kansas City in the 'thirties; and New York in the 'forties.... In each case, prosperity preceded this supporting audience and migrations from the deep South contributed to the change.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> During the early forties, the mask slipped completely, and the bop and post-bop musicians emerged. The result was often unconcealed hostility. For a while, some played with their backs to the audience, walked off the stand after their own particular solos, and played it 'cool' to the point of commercial self-destruction. Some came back to their senses and made a living. Others, seconded by the hipster, went down and out, criticizing Louis Armstrong and Dizzy Gillespie in the same breath. The healthy part of the revolt lay in the determination not to play the role of the stereotype Negro entertainer and the desire to be judged only by one's playing. Without the mask there were fewer alibis, but it was far better that way.

M. Stearns, The Story of Jazz, pp.319-20.

Stearns thus characterises bebop as the first period when jazz musicians became artists rather than entertainers. However, there is a third element that characterises early jazz in addition to the masked version and the direct version. This is the conscious manipulation of the mask, by the musicians, and this is inevitably lost if the mask is completely discarded. Stearns himself describes this by referring to Louis Armstrong:

> For example, Armstrong's 1931 recording of 'All of Me' is a one-man cultural conspiracy. In the middle of his vocal, his accent goes insanely British... and he roars in his gravelly voice '(I can't) get on dee-ah, without you!' These are the lyrics but the implications are many and various. On the surface, Louis is saying: 'This is as far as I can get with these corny lyrics without clowning, out of sheer embarassment'. At the same time, by changes in the melody and by unusual accents in the rhythm, he makes the listener suddenly realize that he, Armstrong, is in full, double-edged control of the musical situation, embroidering beautifully on the stereotyped mask, and enjoying the whole affair hugely. In a word: he is the master - not of just the music but also of a complex and ironic attitude, a rare, honest way of looking at life... Indeed, ironic nuances and implications occur in many fine jazz vocals.
>
> ibid, p.318

To Marshall Stearns, who wrote this in 1956, the loss of this particular quality didn't seem important. Indeed, to him it was a necessary step, indicating a much wider understanding by the white public of what he considered to be the real jazz. One can understand this easily if one assumes that Stearns subscribed to the liberal political belief that Blacks were steadily progressing towards a full and equal participation in American society, and that the end of racial inequality was simply a matter of time.

However, the change which Stearns implies was taking the music into an area where it wasn't affected by racial attitudes ('the desire to be judged only by one's playing') was in fact one further step in the political development of Black musicians. As he himself describes, they were still manipulating the expectations of white audiences, but this time in a more aggressive way that reflected their increased freedom. They were deliberately separating themselves from an audience that expected them to be sincere, polite artists. The role of the artist is just as much a stereotyped expectation as that of the entertainer, and the turning of backs and so on which Stearns refers to implies a rejection of this role. It was an indication that jazz was still achieving a balance between Black and white audiences and responding creatively to a more sophisticated political expectation.

Thus we see once again a crucial part of the social meaning of Black music being determined by its relationship with the dominant white culture. It is surprising how much the dynamic nature of this relationship has been overlooked by jazz writers.[1]

1. There are some exceptions to this. Leroi Jones and Marshall Stearns are the two main ones. A third is the English writer Roger Taylor who in his book, Art: An Enemy of the People, examines jazz history specifically around the relationship between Black and white. The American sociologist Howard Becker, who was also a jazz pianist does go into the question of musicians wearing masks to control their relationship with the audience in Outsiders, however he fails to place his material in its historical or cultural context and thus misleadingly presents it as being a general feature of dance music. (For example, he says nothing about colour of musicians or audience apart from indicating that some, at least, of his musicians were WASPS).

The whole question of masks could obviously be taken much further since it isn't confined to musicians or to Black Americans. One analogy that could be made is a comparison between the straightforward Blackman image represented by Joe Louis and the very subtle manipulation of image and expectations that Muhammad Ali uses (perhaps a parallel to the Art Ensemble of Chicago).

Even when it is perceptively recognised by writers like Stearns it is often treated as something that must be transcended so that the music can rise above it, rather than being an essential part of the music. The point is that it is impossible for Black musicians to simply discard the mask and take on a role parallel to that of the European artist, because the actual content of their music contradicts this. If this were to happen it would imply the merging of Black and white culture and the end of racial oppression.

All this provides a perspective for what I understand to be the political meaning of the music of the Art Ensemble of Chicago. For their variation in stance I referred to amounts to a historical continuation of the manipulation of masks. And they have developed this in a way that both attracts a large (for jazz) white audience in Europe and the USA and also gives them an aura of hipness amongst the Black community, firstly for the very fact that they are so much in control of white expectations of them, and secondly for their creative use of Black traditions.

At one level they have increased the entertainment value of the music by dressing up, by including political narration and various dramatic musical devices. At another level they are using these things as a way of identifying themselves with their cultural history and reaffirming the skill of Black musicians in keeping one step ahead of their white audiences, never letting the audience quite pin them down.

They do this successfully because the references they make to their own tradition have the air of authenticity. They are very enjoyable as music in themselves and not just as a kind of cultural signpost. So the music can work at different levels: the direct level of physical enjoyment of the very diverse sounds produced and the abstract level of connecting the sound

with history and culture. Or, putting it another way, it can function as entertainment, art or meta-art (since it actually questions the nature of art). Or, in yet another way, it combines something that people know (the jazz tradition) with something they don't know (the ethnic influences and the free improvisation) with a coherent link between the two. It exists in a form that acknowledges its dual nature of being community culture and market commodity.

This long discussion of the music of the Art Ensemble of Chicago has been intended to show for a particular case how the social meaning of a musical performance is produced by the specific combination of musical content and social and cultural context. I suggested this in general terms in Chapter two and this section can be seen as a case study of the propositions put forward there.

So far, I have discussed the music of the Art Ensemble in relation to their broad cultural and historical context; that is to say I have treated it as a cultural moment in the developing tradition of Black American music. However, it is the specific circumstances of this group that has allowed them to express this moment in a very succint way. There are three aspects to this:

Firstly, the context provided by the AACM for their early work is important. It enabled them to develop the collective relationships in their music without feeling obliged to prove their individual capabilities all the time. The collective organisation of the AACM would naturally be most compatible with a collectively based music. At this stage, then, it was important that the Art Ensemble were away from the direct pressures of the market place. The political climate of Chicago in the late 60s, a rising militancy among Black organisations,

would also have increased their awareness of the political significance of Black culture, although they were certainly not involved in 'front-line' politics.

Secondly, when they went to live in Paris in 1969, the cultural and political situation was ripe for the acceptance of their music. Not only was it startingly new and fresh, and created largely spontaneously, but it was also the artistic expression of a repressed social group and seemed politically very aware. Moreover, on the one hand it represented raw emotion and 'expressionism' and on the other hand because of the structure I described, which allowed any sounds, musical or non-musical, to be brought in, it suggested the possibility of anybody being able to do it. These aspects of the music were very much in keeping with the libertarian ideas that were crystallized in the 'events' in Paris 1968. In fact the extent of the coincidence of the two sets of ideas is explored by Alfred Willener in his book, The Action - Image of Society. This book discusses various cultural parallels to the May events in Paris from the point of view of a French academic who was closely involved. Of the areas he considers - surrealism, dada, Living Theatre, Godard - Willener believes free jazz comes nearest in spirit and attitudes to the events, and he offers an analysis of the ways in which the music was politicised by Black musicians.

However, the Art Ensemble themselves, were not willing to identify too closely with the political ideas of Paris. Much of it they shrug off as being a misinterpretation of the music, and, for example, they sometimes felt audiences were going too far by actually joining in with them at their concerts. They still consider themselves primarily as musicians and from this point of view their time in Paris could be seen as simply following the long established tradition of American expatriate musicians living there, which goes back to Sydney Bechet and others in the 1920s. Nevertheless, it was undoubtedly more than this. It was their compatibility with the special cultural

climate, their ability to express the particular cultural moment, that must have enabled them to record over a dozen albums in two years in France and helped them retain a large following there for the ensuing ten years.

Thirdly, when they moved back to Chicago in the early 1970s they were able both to maintain a community base there and gradually address their music to the world-wide jazz market place. The music that had had highly specific political meanings in the contexts of Chicago and Paris was now taking on the characteristics of a salable cultural commodity. The way it related to Black cultural history was very attractive to the world-wide jazz audience who always look towards Black American musicians for the real and authentic developments in the tradition. Thus they now play regular concert tours of Europe, America and Japan and their records are widely available.

The 'Blackness' of the Art Ensemble has developed from being a radical cultural statement in the late 60s to being a salable commodity in the late 70s. But by always considering it as music first and underplaying its social and political meanings they have been able to transcend these changes in context to attain a long term continuity in their music.

Thus in the case of the Art Ensemble of Chicago, the "interdependence of social and musical factors" which Jost speaks of (see p.126) is based on a more or less conscious (but not admitted) juggling of cultural forces and manipulation of audience expectations. Some other groups in the AACM have similarities in their approach (for example the concert by the Kahil El'Zabar group which I described at the beginning of this Chapter) but there are also some musicians who inject this interdependence into a concept of working that is nearer to the simple concept of art, than the complex combining of art and entertainment that I have just described. The next section, about Leo Smith, explores this further.

vi) Leo Smith

Leo Smith, like John Jackson, grew up in the south. In his case it was in a farming community at Leland, Mississippi where he was born in 1941. His step-father was a blues singer and guitarist and the house was often full of music and musicians. His musical apprenticeship was served during five years in three different army bands and during this time he also started playing free music, partly influenced by Ornette Coleman.

> When we were in France we played at an ambassador's dance and my group played, as well as other groups. And we played free music - we played a theme and then we played free. The bandmaster tried to find grounds to court-martial us for playing like that, because the whole audience totally froze. It was like someone had dropped a bomb to paralyze everybody.

Smith arrived in Chicago in January 1967, immediately became associated with the AACM and soon actually joined. He lived there for only 2½ years until he left for Europe with Anthony Braxton and Leroy Jenkins. However, he may be considered an important member because he has continued to live and preach the philosophy of the AACM. In contrast to Braxton who has spoken of his disillusionment with collectives ("There is a tendency for them to move at the rate of the slowest member"), Smith has used collectivism as part of the base of his philosophy, believing it to be the natural mode of action for Black people, having its roots deep in African societies.

Since 1971, apart from two short residences in Europe, Smith has lived in Connecticut where he has instigated another collective, the Creative Music Improvisors Forum (CMIF) the core of which is 9 musicians playing in the New Haven area. The small town life of Connecticut suits his temperament and he has been able to live a more balanced sort of life with his wife, who is a teacher, and their two children. As well as working locally he has

sustained his links with Europe, playing there frequently and has also continued travelling around the United States. Although less than 100 miles from New York he rarely visits and is disdainful of the competitiveness of the music scene there. He believes it inculcates a selfish individualism into the musicians, and that a metropolis is not necessary for the music.

I described him as one of the theorists of the AACM. This is illustrated by the fact that he has published two booklets and has written articles for journals. (Also he has his own record company which has so far published three of his records). Much of his writing goes back to his time spent in Chicago and talking about that, he emphasises that all the musicians were very aware of what they were doing.

> Everyone was conscious of the types of form and types of structure they were using. People were very interested in research. In fact, after Braxton, Leroy Jenkins and I began to play together myself, Joseph Jarman and Braxton formed together a little group, not a musical group just a little inner group, and once a week we'd meet at Braxton's house on the South side and we would listen to music and analyze it. We talked about things we hoped to develop. We would talk about these things. This was as organised as the whole process of sound, rhythm and silence.
>
> Coda, Nov. 75, p.4.

One of the things that must have grown out of these discussions was the elaboration of the term Creative Music. As used in the name of the AACM the term is ambiguous. Does it imply that straight musicians are not creative? Or that composed music isn't creative? Or that bebop improvisors aren't creative? In Leo Smith's terminology it doesn't imply any of these. It is actually a way of redefining the cultural tradition of the music by its production rather than by its outer characteristics.

> The first thing I'm starting with is to give the music its proper name; and by proper name I mean a name that houses the history of the music, and that covers several continents. The name for all music based on improvisation is Creative Music - something that is being created by the musicians as it is played. The Creative musician is one who has the ability to instantaneously organise sound, rhythm, silence, space as a perfect musical thought. Now, some places have the title to it historically so to speak; say Africa, Asia, certain points in Europe, also in America; North, South and Central.
>
> Musics 18 p.ii.

According to Smith the word 'jazz' only applies to a short period in the history of the music, namely 1914 to 1933. However, he uses the terms 'Creative music' and 'Black music' more or less interchangeably or sometimes together (in the form 'Creative music (Black music)') to make it absolutely clear what tradition he is talking about.

Although not actually claiming the superiority of Creative music over Classical music (composition), he values highly the directness of improvisation in communicating, since the listener actually witnesses the creation and not the reproduction of the music. The deep meaning of improvisation is, for Smith, based on the wide scope of time and experience that is concentrated into the moment of creation.

> his total life experience is drawn from, including his faculties of rightreasoning and the make-up of his psychological and physiological existence. all of these factors determine what is actually being expressed at that moment of conception and creation. thus, at each instant, the improvisor's creation includes the entire spectrum of space and cycle of time (past, present and future). his music is not, like composition, one that is conceived as one idea at one instant, only to be

> funneled at a later time through a standard system of notation onto paper as merely a related idea, and finally interpreted and performed sometime in the future as an idea removed at least three times from the original.
>
> notes - no page numbers.

A simple distinction between improvisation and composition is not easy since systems of notation are used by some improvisors, including Smith, but he argues that their function is fundamentally different from notated composition.

> although an improvisor may create and notate certain types of symbols and forms in which to retain creative music, this process is not composition, for any elements of improvisation that are notated are but mere forms to be exploited by creative improvisors. the method and symbols used by the improvisor in retaining an improvisation have never been (and must never be) standardized.
>
> likewise, technique for the improvisor is not an arbitrary consumption of an abstract standardized method, but rather a direct attunement with the mental, spiritual and mechanical energy necessary to express a full creative impulse. in other words, to improvise, a display of flawless standardized technique is not enough: an improvisor must be creative. from the very moment of the improvisor's acquaintance with technique, it is the all-out goal to respond to the solo creative impulse from within which makes for the uniqueness of originality among all creative performers. the improvisor realises that the natural course of his music is to respond to his own impulses, which by their very nature are original and individual.
>
> notes.

Smith has actually devised two separate notation systems of his own which he uses in his solo and group music, and the importance of his writing is that it places his individual creation within a cultural tradition of strong individuals working together collectively. (See, for example the quotation from Smith on page 28). It has been one of the musical characteristics of the AACM to explore different ways of using notation within improvisation. For example Roscoe Mitchell, Henry Threadgill, Muhal Richard Abrams, Anthony Braxton and George Lewis have all developed to some extent their own notation systems. This is in contrast to the music of the Musicians Co-operatives to be discussed later where several of the musicians were not happy using notation in any form.

Of the AACM musicians Smith has been the most adamant in separating his notation from composition. He refers to his partially notated pieces as 'works' and the actual notation as 'scores' but not as composition. Many of the other members refer to their 'compositions' even to the extent of calling totally improvised pieces compositions. This must be seen as an attempt to establish their credibility as serious musicians in a culture dominated by European standards. However it also tends to mystify the processes involved and is a dubious way of building up recognition for Creative Music in the long term.

As Leo Smith pointed out the whole subsidy system in the USA is weighted against Creative Music. For example in 1977 of the fellowships that the National Endowment for the Arts awarded to musicians, the maximum for Creative Music was $5000 whereas for Euro-American music it was $15000, so it is easy to see why some musicians might be keen to define their music as composition.

Economics aside, Smith believes that a good understanding of the use of structuring within improvisation is essential for its health and future development, even if it doesn't involve notation:

> What we've been doing is we can structure orders of events, textures without even writing a note. It's a spontaneous thing - it's done without even talking about it you see and that comes from having such a long tradition. The structure would evolve spontaneously with the music. It would be obvious to the players. We would move from that level and that's how we create the music.

He believes that some of the English musicians who eschew written structures altogether will gradually perceive the benefits of using them and change their ways.

Smith's own music also uses much more formal methods of structuring which aren't spontaneous in themselves, although they allow space for spontaneity around and within them.

> There is the dual aspect happening at all times - the highly structured part and the highly spontaneous part evolving.
>
> With the rhythm units system there are nine units and each one represents a number. If I use these for improvisation, whichever units appear in the scored part are used in the improvised section.

The rhythm units system then is based on numbers and rhythm and also incorporates Smith's special notion of musical silence. Each rhythm unit comprises a sound followed by an equal period of silence.

His other system 'creative invention' or 'ahkreanvention' is more ambitious, since it is designed to be used by musicians from different cultures that use improvisation (especially African and Asian) and is part of his project to develop a world music.

> Within this system, all of the elements of the scored music are controlled through

> symbols designating duration, improvisation, and moving sounds of different velocities. These symbols are depicted on two kinds of staffs: sound staffs divided into low, medium and high; and sound staffs of adjustable sound partials.
>
> from sleevenote to Divine Love ECM 1143.

Smith's world music project is still at an early stage and the sort of music it will produce is not yet clear. The only recorded example of the notation system so far is by three musicians from within the 'jazz' tradition (the trumpet-players Lester Bowie, Lenny Wheeler and Smith). The interesting thing about the project is that it seems to be a parallel re-interpretation of cultural history to that of the Art Ensemble and is based on a strong vision about the future of music.

Smith expounded his views in an article in the academic journal The Black Perspective in Music. It was entitled (MI) American Music, and in it he argued that a new American music would develop which "would be something wholly different from either composed or improvised music". It would develop more from Creative Music than from classical music because the former is more truly American and also "has the ability to absorb from its environment that natural flavour of a land and its people". This music he calls "New World music" and one assumes he is using the term both to mean the music of the new world (i.e. America) and the new music of the world.

Traces of the world music which would then develop are already perceivable, he argues, but "those who perform this music seem to be ill-informed as to the true nature of the musics being used" and this detracts from the music.

> The creators themselves (I shall not call them musicians) will need the broadest kind of educational preparation and knowledge of the applied mechanics and performing techniques of the musics found on all continents of the world. They will need

> not only to know and understand the social and philosophical and religious systems of all people, but also to know the applied science of these different musics as well. It will not be enough for the creators to organize orchestras in such a way that Asians or Africans or Europeans or Americans will be contributing the respective flavors of their land in a single performance; but, rather they must be able to absorb the wholeness of their musics and with their psyche be able to give form to it through consciousness manifested in intellect, emotion and intuition.
>
> The Black Perspective in Music, Fall 1974, Vol.2 no.2, p.116.

The vision is a millenial or utopian one, looking forward as it does to a new kind of person as well as a new society, and ignoring the political realities of the transformations required; especially since it doesn't link the American cultural development to parallel developments in other cultures. It is clear that in the end a 'world music' must come from the world and not just from one country. It is difficult to know exactly how literally Smith expects it to be taken, but in any case it helps to explain his own position as a musician, because with his theory he defines himself in relation to history and also defines his attitude to creating music. Like the Art Ensemble he considers his music to be an extension of the tradition of African-American Black music, Creative music. However Smith's position, rather than combining the roles of entertainer and artist, as I suggested the Art Ensemble did, concentrates firmly on the latter. In terms of the jazz tradition he is a radical innovator and part of the point of his theory is actually to establish his music as being a continuation of the tradition, which, as I have said, includes innovation.

The concept of art for Smith is closely linked to the ideas of personal and original innovation and in this way his position is still firmly linked with the tradition because he is not

claiming that the music has advanced to being an art, but that it has always been an art. He has spoken of how even some of the earliest jazz musicians such as Joseph Oliver actually considered themselves as artist and not as entertainers.

Moreover his idea of what art is, is not centred so much around self-expression as around the social role of the artist - not as it actually is in society but as the artist himself conceives of it. That is to say it relies on the individual musician's image of himself:

> I want to be able to channel music back towards the tradition of the musician.... as somebody who didn't just play an instrument and send out notes in a relationship called art. I want to get back to the first tradition of the creative musician, which was to be able to perform, heal, be a spokesman and leader in the community and to be able to channel ideas of influence over great distances - and not be so centred on himself and 'success'.

ECM information 1979.

Like his ideas of world music, this idea of the role of the musician is a very abstract one and it is difficult to see how it would work in practice. The main aim seems to be to increase the respect for musicians in the community and thus prepare the way for the acceptance of the ideas in the music. But how is this to be done? It obviously relates back to some of the aims of the AACM but in a way Smith seems further away from a practical realisation of these aims than when he was in Chicago. Most of Smith's playing is still done in situations aptly described as "a relationship called art" and unlike the Art Ensemble he uses no contingent musical devices for transcending this. If the theory were to be followed to its extreme it would seem to suggest withdrawing himself completely from professional performance and concentrating on community activity. This is

not a practical solution since it is probable that the community activity would not be given the significance Smith desires of it by other people. Also there is no sound economic base for this.

A way of getting round the problem is to act as if the desired situation already existed, to write about it and to hope that this will help it come about. This is basically what Smith does, and explains why much of his writing is concerned with describing ideals rather than with explaining how to achieve these ideals, other than a simple exhortation to individuals to strive to attain them.

Seen in a practical light, then, Smith's concept of the role of a musician has important problems to it and it seems puzzling. But it is related too, to his desire to develop a 'world music', which is his major musical project. Before I say more about this relationship it is necessary to look closer at his actual musical practice.

Smith's music, like his theory, is based on belief and emotion as much as rationality. Because of this, it often conveys a feeling that could be called religious or mystical. Smith's music represents not his direct response to the world but more the expression of an ideal which he has constructed through living in the world. One comes back again and again to the concept of beauty when trying to describe his music. I wrote the following description of part of a concert by Smith in May 1978.

> The concert takes place on 28 May 1978, in Bristol. It starts with three solo improvisations by Leo Smith using trumpet, flugelhorn, thumb piano and flute. Even before he plays, it is clear that he is going to confront the problem boldly. He stands near the audience facing them squarely; feet slightly apart and the trumpet pointing directly towards the back of the concert hall.

During the first few minutes, we learn much:

> Two staccato notes with space between them - middle C# up to G#- and then a long high F breaking into a complex multiphonic with spit and vibration combining. A short, low E answering the first note and then a flowing chromatic phrase in the middle register hinting at a triplet rhythm. Down, then up, then down again. Silence.

The extremes have already been defined within the first half minute of the piece. Short notes, long notes, fast notes, silence, high, low. It is effectively a gathering together of materials and we infer that the improvisation will consist of a development and elaboration of these materials.

> The same multiphonic based on high F, soon resolving to E then D and Eb. A split note staccato on middle Eb, a long round tone on D, slurred to a shorter C. Short silence. Staccato low F#, D, middle F#. Another chromatic phrase, longer this time, and in a lower, richer area of the horn. Starts on middle A, down to the lowest register and ending again on middle F#.

All the sounds to be made during this improvisation will be purposefully beautiful.

> New melodic material is now introduced. Top A slurred to Bb, breath, A (D) G G# - played very definitely, on beat,and with no particular rhythmic inflection. D# (cracked), C#; C, A#. Then, surprisingly the first quiet notes - low A#, A, C#. Upbeat to Eb, D, C, Bb, A--, G--, C#--. Middle Bb to A with grace notes and alternation then Bb, C--. Cadential silence. End of first section.

The introduction of quiet notes and song-like, lyrical melodies makes an unexpected contrast to the other material and suggests a wider emotional span.

> A series of 9 staccato notes in two similarly shaped groups, but with a light moving rhythm to them, not yet heard. A long, high G#. Descending chromatic phrase of about 16 notes to low E. (D) Eb, D. Staccato F#, then another chromatic phrase....

> The notes are gradually given a more subtle rhythmic inflection, the runs become more devious and several new elements are introduced. A rapid slurring from high notes to low notes. A fluttering sort of movement on some shorter phrases. The music moves in sections of one to two minutes, each section ending and beginning with a cadential silence. The basic elements are given a different emphasis in each section.

There is no overall linear development in the piece, no climax (no meaning in the sense of European classical music) and no continuing swing or pulse (no meaning in the sense of African-American classical music).

The meaning actually comes from the way the different melodic and rhythmic ideas are juxtaposed; sometimes flowing into each other, sometimes making abrupt contrasts on either side of a silence. Certain elements, such as the long flowing chromatic phrases and the asymmetrical groups of 4 staccato notes form linking structures in the piece and serve as a sort of reassurance to the listener, a reference point for the fresh ideas that are introduced throughout the piece. And yet they are actually more than this, because the way in which they are combined, increasingly closely as the piece progresses is often the seed for new material to emerge. Towards the end of the piece (it lasts for 13 minutes), there is an increasing feeling of resolution in the melodic phrases; movement towards a place of rest is implied. But before this place is reached, there is an acceleration in the flow of ideas - short two note phrases are followed by very fast runs and the piece finishes before the idea of resolution can be developed.

The meaning actually comes from the sound. Strong, round, brassy. Low, deep, direct. Occasionally mellowed with a reduced loudness or slight vibrato. Sometimes broken into its separate parts or accompanied by a sympathetic buzzing as with many African instruments. A warm sound, one of the warmest I have heard.

The end of the piece is greeted with warm applause by the audience.

Smith's solo music is specially characterised by a concept of beauty and clarity of expression. In his group music it is more

difficult though, since his idea of beauty must co-exist with the ideas of other musicians. He is concerned with making music collectively, but he is also concerned with the end result. In other words, it must still be beautiful. And this is where his notation systems and scores come in.

As in the case of Roscoe Mitchell's The Little Suite, Smith is often in the position of directing a collective relationship. His notation sometimes tells people exactly what to play, at other times it only indicates rhythms and relationships of rhythms, or simply who is to play when. Overall, it seems to move the music towards a low key set of understatement where consecutive sections stand more or less on their own without any ongoing developmental relationships. Although each musician's role in the music is of equal importance they are all actually limited in the direction they can take the music by Smith's scores. Nevertheless, especially with the later system, 'akreanvention', it can have the effect of concentrating the music and focussing the listeners' attention on the subtlety of variation possible within a limited form. This is certainly the case on the recording of the piece Tastalun (on ECM 1143), which is for three muted trumpets. Although each of the three players has a very distinctive individual sound, the effect of the mutes and the score combined brings them much closer together so that they are only just recognisable as individuals. The result is a fascinating blend of individual styles adapted to the requirements of Smith's score.

In a group situation where Smith isn't the leader the relationships that occur are different again. The same concert in which I described the solo piece included a duet with the Bristol percussionist Bob Helson of which I wrote:

The duet with percussionist Bob Helson, comes in the second half of the concert. For this,,Leo plays a Ghanaian end-blown flute. He uses the natural scale of the instrument and starts by playing an attractive tune on it. His flute playing is more decorative than his trumpet playing; he makes use of trills, grace notes and slides between notes, and most of his phrases have song-like quality to them. Bob responds tentatively at first by playing quiet rolls on the drums, taps on the edge of cymbals, bells, balaphone, gong; small noises and clicks. He relates to the decoration in Leo's playing more than to the melodic line itself. At first, it seems that Bob is finding it difficult to play. His problem is how to make a positive and independent contribution to the piece without actually destroying the very delicate mood that has been established by Leo's flute playing. But as the piece continues, the relationships begin to change. The interaction at the micro-structural, decorative level continues but at the same time Bob begins to play more directly with Leo. Occasionally, he picks up the rhythm of the phrases being played by Leo and at one point there is a hint of a call and response, conversational relationship between the two. Leo responds to one of Bob's sudden silences by playing a long note which he breaks up into a slurred, rhythmic phrase using the contrast between the overblown and natural ranges of his flute and then develops this into a restatement of his theme. Bob continues to improvise (he has probably only half-recognised the theme) and is still introducing fresh material, so the piece doesn't actually resolve, or have any simple formal structure. They end together (the piece has lasted for 6 minutes).

Leo has handled this piece more traditionally than his solo. He restated the theme at the end and used a more common method of improvising in the middle, building up to climaxes of pitch and speed. However, Bob has all but ignored this structure; he echoed it in places, but overall his playing was in response to the details and not the large form. By the end of the piece it is clear that Bob has built up his contribution through the microstructure, through a particular coherence of detail, a persistent subtlety; and this has actually proved more positive than simply following the rise and fall of the piece. It has made for a greater richness in the music. It was almost as if Bob had got up from his drums which were set up behind

> Leo and played beside them, quietly re-defining his his supposed role of accompanist.
>
> A superficial listening might have considered Bob to be merely scratching the surface.

The strength of Leo Smith's position is that it allows him to function confidently as himself in any surroundings since he is responsible only for his own contribution to the music.

> the concept that i employ is to consider each performer as a complete unit with each having his or her own centre from which each performs independently of any other, and with this respect of autonomy, the independent centre of the improvisation is continuously changing depending on the force created by individual centres at any instance from any of the units. the idea is that each improvisor creates as an element of the whole, only responding to that which is creating within himself instead of responding to the total creative energy of the different units. this attitude frees the sound-rhythm elements in an improvisation from being realised through dependent re-action.
>
> notes

His concept of group music, then, is that it stems from the individual. Helson's concept, by contrast, starts from the idea of the group itself and his basic method of playing with people he doesn't know is not to make a strong individual statement, but to start tentatively and gradually explore what the particular group sounds like. In fact strong individual statements may actually weaken the group in Helson's terms.

Smith's music starts from a statement of self, and Helson's starts from a denial of self. In my article I suggested that this was the basis of the uneasiness I described at the beginning of the duet and that it was related to their very contrasting personal histories:

LEO SMITH: African-American. Born in Leland, Mississippi in 1941. Travelled with blues band and then spent 5 years in the US Army in the USA and Europe. Spent the late 60s in Chicago as part of the Black Musicians' collective, the AACM. Went to live in Paris to spread the music and find audiences. Two residences in Europe and then settled in West Haven, Connecticut. Has published his own books and records. His life has been one of constant choice and positive action. He settled in West Haven because 'the metropolis is not necessary for this music'.

BOB HELSON: Working class, English. Born in Bristol in 1949 and has lived there all his life. After leaving school he worked as a photographer's assistant, then a claimant, then a technician in a school, all the time pursuing music as a part-time activity. He has been involved with the Bristol Musicians' Co-op since 1975 when it started, and has published one record with his regular group. Until recently, when he gave up his day job he had made no major decisions because it was part of his philosophy that he thought he shouldn't have to make decisions. His anti-metropolitan beliefs prevent him from going to London.

So their cultural situations are very different. As a Black American, one assumes that Leo has been surrounded by other people's definitions of himself and so to survive, it has been imperative for him to stand up and say 'I AM NOT THAT. I AM THIS'. But Bob has had no direct experience of racial or class struggle; his experience of the world has been of bureaucracy, stupidity, ignorance, but not deliberate and malicious hostility. No-one has said to him 'YOU ARE THAT' and so he has had no need to respond in that way.

In practical terms the issue again revolves around the concept of beauty, because to Helson the question of beauty is irrelevant. Nevertheless he is aware of Smith's idea of beauty and his problem is how to play in a way which is faithful to his own ideas of group music without undermining Smith's music. In the account of the duet I indicated how Helson actually evolved a way of doing this during the piece itself and my conclusion to the article was actually a celebration of the flexibility of improvisation:

> However, the potential for a very complex communication is present in the form as I have tried to show in discussing this concert. There is the possibility of widely different worldviews to be presented side by side without being compromised or weakened. For the listener there is the chance of allowing the music to enrich and elaborate our world view rather than simply confirm beliefs.

But the problem was not resolved in the long term. What occurred at the concert was a definition of philosophical differences, and this actually made a very interesting piece of music.[1] However, Smith's idea of world music requires the relationship to be taken much further than this, and with a much diverser group of musicians. His idea is to work with musicians who have experience only of idiomatic improvisation and not free improvisation. From my account of the duet with Helson it is clear that even within free improvisation and the western world there are serious differences of outlook to be coped with. One would imagine that if Smith actually worked with African or Asian musicians the problems would be enormous. Of course, he is not expecting to resolve all these differences, but it would be difficult for them even to stand in a meaningful juxtaposition unless all the musicians involved were happy with this. At the present time one can imagine Smith being able to find a few sympathetic individuals, but the image of a 'new world music' is distant. Since Smith's notation system is the creation of one man, it must be seen as a transitional stage in solving cultural problems which, if they are to be solved at all, must be solved collectively. In the meantime the music would have an ambiguous status as 'Leo Smith music' and 'world music'.

We can now see that Smith's project is very ambitious in practical terms as well as theoretical ones. Ultimately it seeks to change

1. Helson is one of the musicians who will be discussed in much more detail in the Bristol chapter.

the world. It seeks to both express and create a new consciousness amongst human beings. Thus the cultural moment expressed by Leo Smith's music is a synthesis on a more abstract level than that of the Art Ensemble of Chicago since it represents a projection into a vision of the future, a gathering together of the positive forces that produce the present moment and a chanelling of their energies into an enlightened future moment.

However, it is still too simple to say that Smith is a visionary artist whereas the Art Ensemble are artist-entertainers, because Smith's work can be seen as a clear extension of the Black music tradition as a whole in two ways.

Firstly because it is concerned with musicians rather than music. The tradition, as I have pointed out, has always been concerned with representing a plurality of personal expressions in a collective context. Smith's 'world music' project can be seen as widening this collective context so that a more diverse group of musicians can take part and express their own musical thoughts. It can be compared again to the Art Ensemble of Chicago who have also broadened the context of the music not by bringing in musicians from other cultures but by taking the music of other cultures and reinterpreting it themselves.

Another comparison is useful too. To the Venda chief, and indeed to Mahler, as described in the quote by John Blacking in Chapter two (page 68). The chief, it will be remembered, was bringing together and expressing his whole society: "I will call to my capital every available player in the district". Mahler was bringing together patterns of sound and expressing his own vision of a world: "To write a symphony means, to me, to construct a world with all the tools of the available technique". Leo Smith, being in a cultural situation which is very different from both of these, is striving towards the position of the Venda chief, by calling together musicians from

all over the world to express the world community. Yet, because this community doesn't actually exist in the same physical sense as Venda society, the music must still depend on Smith's personal vision and is thus related to Mahler's position as well as to the Venda.

It is this version of the role of music and the musician that explains Smith's stated desire "to get back to the first tradition of the creative musician, which was to be able to perform, heal, be a spokesman and leader in the community, and to be able to channel ideas of influence over great distances" (page 158). I said that in practical terms this desire seemed puzzling, but when it is placed in the context of the content of his music and his overall world view it is clearly consistent.

The second reason that Smith's music can be seen as an extension of the American Black music tradition is that the latter, as I have stressed throughout, has at its heart the fusion of different cultural forms. It has always expressed the contradictions of being an African-American in terms of that social group's particular history. As both their self-consciousness and their practical links with the rest of the world increase it is natural that they should look outside their own history towards social groups with whom their direct relationship has been lost, and by trying to bring together these groups further enrich their respective traditions.

vii) Achievements

In the last four sections I have described four different ways in which musicians conceive their music. Between them the four cover a very wide range of personalities and attitudes and yet all have this common link, Black culture, expressed through their involvement with the AACM. It is interesting to consider their activity in terms of the overall field of view that each has when making music, that is the concept each has of the context of their work - what I described in Chapter two as the social meaning for the producer.

For John Jackson, the context is geographical and social. He is working in the Black community in Chicago. He conceives himself as part of that community and also part of the Black community in the whole USA.

For Fred Anderson, the context is historical and musical. He is looking back through the traditions of Black music and playing what he considers to be a logical extension of this.

The Art Ensemble of Chicago operate with a much wider context. Socially they look both to the local Black community and to the world community of jazz listeners. Musically and culturally they look back to the Black music tradition and out to various ethnic musics; but rather than using these as a known context for logical extension, they select specific parts of it and use them as they are, thus making the context part of the musical message.

Leo Smith looks back to the traditions of Black music and partly bases his music on a logical extension in a way similar to Fred Anderson. But the difference is that when Smith looks forward, he is thinking in terms of a blossoming of human creativity. Of people of all races expressing the universal creative essence of being. Thus although the physical context is the world community of jazz listeners, the spiritual context is the cosmos.

Although I have presented these contexts in terms of individuals within the AACM, each one represents a particular response to cultural and social pressures that are felt by all the members, and there is much cross-fertilisation of ideas. Since the organisation is collective it can only be fully portrayed by looking at all the members, but I have tried to indicate the nature of the diversity by my selection of individuals. My main interest has been in the various social meanings expressed through the music, and I have been particularly concerned with exploring ways in which these social meanings might be called political. Some of these are not normally recognised as being political and the musicians themselves are partly responsible for this. They often explain the meaning of the music explicitly as taking the listener away from a political consciousness.

Joseph Jarman:

> You have to look at the whole world perspective - political, economic, sociological - at any given time that we look at these phenomenons, yeah?.... The country had just come out of the Korean conflict. Everything was getting tight again because there was no war to support the society. Capitalist structure depends on war like Vietnam. They're probably looking for other wars to spend on. If it doesn't have war it can't sustain itself because the people refuse to what they call 'give up' something they've got. So all they do is strangle the masses and perpetuate the bourgeoisie.
>
> But all of this is ongoing and those are actually constant given problems. The thing is to seek alternatives to those problems and somehow allow them to take care of themselves.
>
> So through the ideals of the AACM we have found out that this is possible - to survive. Coltrane actually made clear that there are other forces in the universe that we should be considering and many people are considering them. I myself have seen a glimpse of something going on so I'll try and advocate the reality and consciousness of the universal force and power so that people can

> consider that as an alternative to the kind of suffering that the mundane world forces human beings into.

Kahil El'Zabar actually wanted to separate the discussion of politics from that of music:

> I hate to talk about politics but it has to do with politics to a certain extent.

and later on, explaining the purpose of the AACM:

> The music is really about enlightening on the the spiritual and mental and physical level. When you leave you have an experience that inspires you to an understanding of what life means to you... Those are the types of things that people are starting to come to the AACM to see. Also let them see that: 'Hey, there are serious human beings about the development and uplifting of man through the art of music', and if we're really spending our time doing this type of thing then wherever we perform has got to be an enlightening experience and that's one of the so-called goals of the experience.

So is it correct for me to place so much emphasis on the political content of the music?

I think it is, because of the way the term 'political' has been used. Jarman and El'Zabar are both talking about political in a narrow sense of being about 'mundane' everyday political struggle. They are talking about an alienated politics where people's lives are manipulated for repressive purposes. To take on this sort of struggle on its own terms, they suggest, is self-defeating. It is necessary to transcend it in some way, and they express this transcendence in terms of spiritual enlightenment.

But the sorts of political meaning I have been talking about are perfectly compatible with this spirituality. I have described the music as expressing the cultural and social situation of Black Americans and thus as a way of increasing self-awareness and social solidarity. The way this political effect is mediated through the individual consciousness is through its spirituality. Thus the political meaning doesn't work directly through exhorting people to change the society, but indirectly through changing people's self-consciousness and awareness of culture to a state where they are prompted to take their own position, social and historical, seriously and to question society more deeply.

Political meanings such as this are difficult to gauge quantitatively since they are so indirect, but the statements by Jarman and El-Zabar and many others from both musicians and listeners indicate something of the political effect.

The political achievement of the organisation itself is that it has, over a period of fifteen years, maintained a structure through which a developing avant-garde music can exist in a direct relationship with a community, opposing both commercial centralisation and artistic separation. The AACM school which continues to provide a "free training Program for inner-city young people" is an indication that despite the world-wide fame of some of the members this relationship is still being sustained.

However, this fame has changed the organisation in other ways. For some of the younger musicians joining their experience has been very different from that of the original members. Two examples of this are the trombonist George Lewis and the saxophonist Chico Freeman, both of whom achieved international reputations very quickly through a network of AACM contacts. In a sense the pull of professionalism is stronger now and a large number of the members live in New York where there is no

organised branch of the AACM or similar organisation (although there are several organisations that provide part of the function of the AACM). To some extent the concert presentations in Chicago too have become more geared to economics. As I mentioned earlier, there aren't so many of them and they are often grant-aided.

However, the grant aid they have received ($8,000 from the National Endowment for the Arts in 1977, the year I visited) is nowhere near high enough to support an isolated 'pure art' situation. This, and the simple fact that Chicago is away from the centre of the international jazz market-place will ensure that the AACM's activity there remains community orientated. Other than that, future developments can't be forseen.

CHAPTER 4: NEW YORK

i) History

I have already characterised New York as the jazz metropolis from the 1930s onwards but it was an important centre for jazz and popular music earlier than this too.

> New York was in the 1920s, as it is now, the musical center of the world. The most important publishing houses, recording companies, and other business activity involved with music were located there or nearby. The city irresistably attracted musicians in all fields and styles. Sooner or later everyone in the music field, regardless of where his first successes were scored, had to come to New York for ultimate recognition.... New York played an increasingly important role during the twenties in terms of musical activity and economic potentiality. This development reached its peak in 1928 and 1929, when, significantly, both Armstrong and Morton moved permanently from Chicago to New York.
>
> Gunther Schuller, Early Jazz, p.246.

In the early part of this century New York experienced the same sort of migration from the south as did Chicago, its Black population rising from 60,666 in 1900 to 152,407 in 1920. It was during this period too that Harlem, the northern part of Manhattan, was transformed from wealthy white suburb into Black slum.

Ostransky describes a wide range of nightspots providing employment for musicians from expensive nightclubs for white "thrill seekers", including the famous Cotton Club where Duke Ellington first became widely known, to after hours spots for jam sessions, to theatres that provided variety shows including jazz (such as the Apollo) and Black dance halls. As well as these public venues for the music there were the frequent 'rent parties' which provided much work for piano

players, but not for bands.

According to Gunther Schuller the pre-jazz music of Black New York was dominated by James Reese Europe, and apart from his musical importance he is of interest because he formed one of the first co-operative ventures for Black musicians - the Clef Club:

> In 1910, frustrated with the difficulties black musicians had in finding employment, he organized a co-operative booking agency and clearing house through which the general public could hire black musical groups, opened an office and lounge on West 53rd Street, advertised their wares - bands from three to thirty men furnished at any time, day or night - and eventually brought to the membership more work and better pay than they had previously known.
>
> L. Ostransky, Jazz City, p.211.

During the twenties and thirties musicians came from all over the country to live and work in New York. Fletcher Henderson from Georgia, Duke Ellington from Washington D.C., Cub Calloway from Baltimore, Andy Kirk from Kansas City, Jimmy Lunceford from Memphis, Chick Webb from Baltimore and so on. Thus there was no particular style associated with New York, no single coherent community of musicians developing together. Rather, it was the place you went when you already had something to show. This has continued to be the case and it is one of the basic facts that distinguishes New York from Chicago. The one exception to this rule was the small group music that developed in Harlem in the early forties, bebop. The musicians came from all over the USA but it was not until they gathered together at the two Harlem clubs, Minton's and Monroe's, that the style crystallized.

> All this was going on in some obscurity. A recording ban had been called by the Musicians Union in an effort to force the record companies to pay royalites to the band musicians, and the swing audience outside of the two clubs in Harlem where the music was being played was

> unaware of the bob revolt. In 1944 and 1945, Dizzy and Parker began recording; they got their first job in the clubs along Fifty-second Street, their music was given a name, and almost overnight the world of swing was blown apart.
>
> Charters and Kundstadt, Jazz: A History of the New York Scene, p.319.

The move Downtown was significant being both the start of a trend that was to continue and an indication that the music was moving away from dance halls into small nightclubs. By the late 1950s and early 1960s the music was moving away from nightclubs too, as I described in the Chicago section, and geographically in New York this meant a move further south to the lofts and warehouses of Chelsea and Greenwich Village and the run down areas on the lower East side. I have already described the musical changes that took place during this period, [1] the result of this being that the music was less and less suited to a nightclub environment.

It was these changes combined with the unwillingness of the clubs and record companies to accept the new music that created the climate for the formation of a radical musicians' organisation; and it was a group of musicians who were not prepared to accept the assumption that their music was only of minority interest who became the nucleus of the Jazz Composers' Guild.

The members could all be described as part of the jazz avant-garde, but other than that they had no common factors musically. Thus from the start the organisation had a political and economic purpose rather than a musical one. It was only after it started that Carla Bley and Michael Mantler drew most of the members together in the Jazz Composers' Guild Orchestra. But for most of the members this band was a very small part of their musical

1. See my discussion of the music of Cecil Taylor, Ornette Coleman and John Coltrane in Chapter three.

lives. Many of them proudly protected their individual aesthetic positions and it has been suggested by Bill Dixon that the very strength of the 60s scene in New York lay in this individuality. Unfortunately this was not the sort of base on which to build a strong collective organisation as we shall see.

ii) The Jazz Composers' Guild

The Jazz Composers' Guild was formed about 9 months before the AACM in October 1964. The contrast between the two organisations is extreme. The AACM has so far lasted for fifteen years whereas the JCG collapsed in under a year. It is possible that the AACM was inspired partly by the JCG or was at least able to learn from the earlier organisation's mistakes; although according to Steve McCall, one of the founders of the AACM, they knew little about the JCG except that it existed. More likely is that the musical and social environments of the cities were so different that different solutions had to be found.

The JCG was not a natural collective evolution in the way the AACM was but was instigated initially by one man, Bill Dixon. In October 1964 he organised a short festival in a New York cafe featuring most of the new musicians in New York who were finding it difficult to work. It was called the October Revolution, and played to packed houses for a week. From there it was a logical step to form the Guild.

> I think people have always misunderstood my reasons for trying to change things - it's just that I thought ... musicians are not very bright. I've come to realise that a man who practices a horn 5 or 6 hours a day to the exclusion of everything else learns to do one thing. They do two things actually - they play their instruments very well (the good ones), but then they bitch like the devil about something else, and they don't have the ability to go beyond their bitching because they constantly capitulate or compromise. So from generation to generation we never advanced the cause and when I started thinking in terms of the Jazz Composers' Guild, I just thought now was the time, that we should make a very dramatic change - do everything at once. No liberal middle-of-the-road, a little of this. No engaging in dialogues. Just do it. And it could have happened except even the bright musicians didn't have the confidence that it would work.

Dixon was born in 1925 and had a very varied experience.

> Prior to 1964 he had devoted himself to attempts to raise the status of the music and improve its image. In 1958 he formed the United Nations Jazz Society. He lectured frequently, conducted adult education classes and taught trumpet and composition privately. He has also painted and taught art history. In 1962 he went to Europe with a quartet he co-led with Archie Shepp and this, as it turned out, was to be the basis for the group known as the New York Contemporary Five, one of the landmarks in the new Black music.

V. Wilmer, As Serious As Your Life, pp.213-4.

Dixon selected about a dozen of the New York musicians who had played in the Revolution and who he thought would be sympathetic to his cause and invited them to join the Guild. A public statement was issued:

> "The absence of representation of the most vital elements in the main stream of America's contemporary musical culture has made it necessary for the composers and performing musicians most affected to unite for the following purposes: to establish the music to its rightful place in the society; to awaken the musical conscience of the masses of people to that music which is essential to their lives; to protect the musicians and composers from the existing forces of exploitation; to provide facilities for the proper creation, rehearsal, performance and dissemination of the music".

quoted in R. Levin, The Jazz Composers' Guild: An Assertion of Dignity, p.18.

Already, from this statement and from Dixon's own statement, one can see a clear difference from the AACM. Whereas the AACM charter revolved around a relationship of making music within a community, the JCG focussed directly on the musicians as an exploited and repressed group. The changes that the JCG required were exclusively from the audience, who were thought not to appreciate the artistic value of the musicians' work, and, especially, from the entrepreneurs who were thought not to give

the potential audience a chance to develop. No changes were required from the musicians except to keep a tighter rein on their work.

In practice the JCG was a dramatic and flamboyant gesture. The policy was for the members to totally remove themselves from the market place, to work only in concerts organised by the Guild, and then return to the market place only if the Guild as a whole considered the terms to be adequate. Meanwhile, the idea was that the Guild would accumulate income from concerts with which it would eventually buy its own concert hall and set up a record company.

> The same applied to record contracts, so that a given company could pay, say, $75,000 to the entire Guild for recording rights (actually a saving in terms of all that the company would be getting). This $75,000 would go for a building for the Guild, which could then produce its own concerts on its own premises, establish workshops and schools, offices and practice rooms.
>
> A.B. Spellman, Black Music: Four Lives, p.26.

The policy, then, was economically extreme. It worked from the proposition that, at least collectively, the members of the Guild were a strong force in the market place and that if they took a firm stance they could actually force a better deal. However, although there was scope to generate substantial amounts of money collectively, the scheme did little to protect the income of individuals. The fact that there were opportunities for individual musicians meant that some, for whatever reasons, took them, and thus weakened the unity of the organisation. Archie Shepp, for example, took a recording contract with Impulse, a large record company, and he, Sun Ra and some others took part in a live recording session organised by the writer Leroi Jones at the Village Gate.

There were, therefore, strong structural forces that worked

against the success of the organisation. However, Paul Bley, a pianist and one of the four white members, thought that much of the reason for the short life and ultimate failure of the JCG lay in the extremeness and inflexibility of the line taken by Dixon. Bley himself had been involved in a musicians' organisation in Montreal which had succeeded economically without any of the ideological objectives of the JCG.

> Theoretically it (the JCG) was an organisation that could have lasted over a long period of time. If a group of players work collectively they can amass a large amount of money compared to their own incomes in a relatively short period of time. We did it with the players in Montreal who aren't known outside the city. Certainly with players who have recording reputations that process will be multiplied even further. It could have amassed a lot of money and bought a building without the federal government's aid. So it was a very good idea... It didn't need a purpose. It's like saving money in a bank; you don't have to decide to buy X product before you start putting your money in a savings account. When your savings account reaches a certain level it will suggest what to do with it. The organisation didn't need a plan, it didn't need a boycott; it just needed the willingness of the players to contribute their free live performance monies to a collective box office. That's all it needed.

So Bley felt that the same objectives could be achieved without the musicians actually removing themselves from the market place. However, his terminology already gives a clue to the forces that tore the Guild apart. He is speaking the language of capitalism, of free enterprise and private accumulation. His position is based on a kind of common-sense economic realism whereas Dixon's main interest was in a rigorous, almost puritan, artistic and political integrity.

Dixon and Bley were the only two members who I was able to interview at any length but a comparison of their two positions gives a clear insight into the contrary forces at work. Fifteen years after the event, a detailed reconstruction is impossible

and would anyway be superfluous, but we can infer much from the words of Dixon and Bley.

Bill Dixon felt the Guild suffered because of the lack of imagination of the musicians, and because of racial differences.

> My feeling was that a slave only knows how to be a slave. That's his experience. You can tell a man who's very insecure - you can say "Look, if you walk around the corner there's security", and he can't trust you because he doesn't know what security is and he opts to stay with what he knows. And that was pretty much our situation.
>
> Of course this is America you're talking about and racism in America is such that the parent society which has robbed and pillaged everything - they would rather lose some things rather than have the people that they have oppressed come up with a solution. And in the JCG it was finally like that. The white ones wanted to ... try and let everyone else participate even though they can't or don't want to. And that was the reason for its failure.
>
> The innovators in the music have been Black and will continue to be Black until this society changes, no matter how sympathetic white musicians might be or how good they are as players (and there are a lot of good white players). But the minute you start talking about Black music it becomes touchy because they say you can't leave out the white players. I say I can leave them out when I speak of who's been significant... And a lot of that aesthetic argument was always there at every meeting of the JCG, because we were talking about launching an assault not against the Black establishment but against the white establishment and I think that white musicians are always sensitive when you point out that in the past they have been the villains.

Against this background of defining the music as Black music, Dixon particularly resented the fact that it was two white members of the JCG, Mike Mantler and Carla Bley who became proficient in receiving grants.

> When I was trying to get money, no-one had any. The minute I left them these people gave them money to do things that they wouldn't give me to do.
>
> It's incredible. I can almost say that in America you don't want a Black man showing people anything if you can avoid it. And the same thing can be advanced by a white person and it's good - it's valuable and should be subsidised.

Nevertheless, whatever the racial divisions look like in retrospect, at the time Dixon felt it was important to include white members as well as Black.

> That was another thing, people said why did you have a mixed group? But I thought even the White musicians they weren't doing that well and I thought we had more chance if we made it mixed. After a while you stop talking about the riots in America and you start talking about the whole thrust of America. Vietnam and so on.

But this was at a time when many others were arguing for the complete segregation of Black cultural organisations. One of these was the writer and poet Leroi Jones (now Imamu Amiri Baraka) and Bill Dixon identifies Jones as being one of the undermining forces on the Guild.

> It was Leroi Jones who convinced members of the guild that they should perform at the Village Gate for the 'New Wave In Jazz' album. None of them should have been there - they violated the constitution. Archie Shepp and Sun Ra were down there - very very bad news...

Dixon felt that the media in general were largely responsible for creating divisions between musicians and that the Black writers Jones and A.B. Spellman perpetuated this rather than fighting it.

> One very bad thing was that when we got the Black writers A.B. Spellman and Leroi Jones started writing on the music, they selected among the Black players who was significant - and obviously I wasn't one of them. So you had the white writers doing it and the Black writers doing it, and I'm trying to tell them let's ignore all this and I'm losing ground all the time. It was very vicious...

The Guild was not covered much at all in the press. Down Beat carried one article based on an interview with Dixon. Other magazines such as the London Melody Maker merely mentioned the JCG's existence as a news item.

> Even that article. Down Beat didn't want to do that. That was heavily edited. They were very hostile to it. Everyone knew it was something... This wasn't a rebellious situation, it was a revolutionary situation because you were saying: "Let's get rid of this but here is this in its place". We used to have posters in here[1] and people used to come and tear them down. I'm publishing a book and I'll probably reveal the most accurate story on that.

Although withdrawing their work from the market place the JCG was still very dependent on market institutions such as the press, for it was essential that they remained in the public eye. But it was a relationship that was difficult to handle and in the end Dixon lost his grip on it.

> The Village Voice used to be located right there where Burger Town is, and they refused to review any of the concerts that we did. Systematically, Joe Johnson was documenting Merce Cunningham dance at the Judson Church and I went in there - we used to run an ad every week - to ask why he didn't send someone to review us. Not that

1. The interview took place in the Riviera Cafe in Greenwich Village.

we needed endorsement but we did want people to know we did exist.

I kind of lost my head and tried to throw him out the window! So that finished us and we never did get a review. No, we were a success because we made that number of people angry and afraid....

One of the reasons these people from Chicago (the AACM) got so much publicity was because that was what people wanted out there - they pose no threat. The JCG posed an incredible threat to the music industry. I had said we should withdraw our music from the market, which I have done. You cannot hear my music unless you're where I am and that was a proposal I made that no member of the Guild could accept.

It was a success getting that disparate group together to begin with. I never considered it a failure. The concert series at Judson Hall. All that money was made, raised. This was the first time the musicians had raised the money and done all the publicity themselves you know. The fact that we lasted that long through that heavy assault and all that verbiage. And that we made the industry so uncomfortable - I even got death threats on my life.

The interesting thing about members of the Guild was that everyone was different musically (unlike the Chicago people).... The timing is important. Don't forget that this was in the early 60s, it was a healthier scene in the city - painting was flourishing, new ways of looking at dance, we were just beginning to become involved in another way of looking at the theatre - happenings - a different climate. And the music was changing in the way that every art has to survive.

.... My feeling was the time was right.

You'll notice that in the JCG no major people were invited to join... That was done so no-one could accuse us of riding the backs of the other people but finally a couple - I won't mention their names [1] - were approached

1. He implied later that they were Ornette Coleman and John Coltrane.

> about endorsing and neither felt that they could although later on they both started to indicate that they wished they had... At the time they didn't want to disturb the establishment because they had to work, And that's the God honest truth.

Dixon himself was, to a certain extent, in a stronger position than most musicians to boycott the industry because he had the capacity to earn money by other means. He was scornful of musicians who couldn't do this. But his attitude was, of course, inappropriate for someone in his position, who claimed to be trying to build up solidarity. Eventually however the economic forces hit him hard.

> I finally realised that it was actually hopeless. I became very ill... We used to have meetings that lasted 7 or 8 hours and then you could see through that certain people were being pulled away. That one saxophone player in the Guild - we picked up a Down Beat and there was an article on him and they were calling him a calm member which meant that all the rest of us were raving idiots..
>
> There was all this invidious and insidious thing which was pitting us against each other. And people got tired of me telling them what to do, in affect. They could say to me easily "Well, you're not working, and you don't care". I cared, but I was too bright to starve to death. There were other things I could do. That was another thing - too many of them were monochromatic. You see I could do other things. They couldn't - or wouldn't.
>
> If I needed money I would write an article or something. Or transcribe records. I did all the gospel records. What else? I'm a painter. I'd sell a painting if I needed money.
>
> I lived very frugally. At one time I owed everyone in the Village. Every grocery store. I owed my landlord a year's rent. I <u>believed</u> in that thing....
>
> I lived for two days with a dog, a cat, my wife and six month old son in Washington

> Square Park and no-one knew it. So I was hurting just as much as they were, but I didn't have record companies that were interested in my work. See that was it. Per se...
>
> Now if a musician says "How am I going to pay my rent?", as far as I'm concerned, his stock and credibility goes down and it's easier for the oppressor to deal with him you see. I always felt those things were private. So I made out as best I could, but I wasn't doing any better than they were doing. People conveniently misunderstood that. But it was rough going...
>
> I've been kicked in the ass so much by white critics and then no matter who the musicians were they liked to believe it... And since I never placed in any polls or anything people began to say 'Well, Bill Dixon's just an organiser, he's a lousy musician'. Well that's their point of view.
>
> I'm one of the few musicians that all my life I've only played music to please myself, so I couldn't expect people to ... you know. I think my constantly harping on this caused a lot of friction because there were some other Black members who were content to let a lot of things go by. Well I didn't want that. Get cleared up right away and get settled.

Dixon left the organisation in the middle of 1965 having become disillusioned with the way it was going. At one time the Guild members all took a vow never to work in a nightclub again and Dixon has actually stuck to this for the past fifteen years. He has spent most of this time teaching at Bennington College in Vermont, about 200 miles north of New York. But this too has its contradictions. Although he has been able to establish a Black music course there the students he teaches it to are mainly rich and white and often their interest in the music is academic rather than practical. Nevertheless Dixon feels the work is worthwhile and some of the research projects the students do are very relevant in a general sense. For example some students have interviewed club owners to make a survey of

employment opportunities for musicians. Others are building up a library of translations of all the articles that appear in the European jazz magazines.

The college also enables Dixon to continue writing music and rehearsing it with the student ensemble. Although his public performances have been very rare he has built up an enormous collection of compositions, all of which he records whenever they are played. His music has gone more and more in a direction which would be difficult to present in public, writing works of epic length that take several days to perform. His only major public performance in recent years was at the Autumn Festival in Paris 1977 where he directed a piece that took five evenings to perform. The college, he says, gives him and his students a chance to "explore the seriousness of their music" in a way that couldn't be done in New York, because of the economic orientation of the musicians there. He extends his withdrawal from the market to recording too.

> I'm doing five records which will be a ten year retrospective - limited editions which are being done just like paintings, numbered and the original tape will be sold to the highest bidder. Mine will have writing in them, paintings, scores where they exist. I'm doing 1000 and they will sell for $75 a piece... And those records will go to a select group of people. See, I was serious when I said I was withdrawing into exile.

Since the interview a record has appeared on an Austrian label, selling at $35, which although being half Dixon's planned price, is still more than four times the normal price for a record.

Eventually, Dixon plans to extend his teaching activities to running his own music school.

> That's one of the things the JCG would have done. We'd have had a school. In fact, the thing I'm getting ready to do

> now is to form a school. And it's going to be for Black music what Frank Lloyd Wright's Taliensin was for architecture... Because at the school I'm teaching I've gone as far as I can. It's a very upper middleclass school, very rich. It costs about $7000 a year to go there, you get a certain kind of person.
>
> I've moved into a very large house on 400 acres of land. I'm going to see if I can buy this house, then I'm going to build a recording studio then some smaller houses. Then I'm going to have some apprentices, and that will be the beginning.

It is clear, then, that Dixon's withdrawal from the market is intended to improve his position in the market. The idea is to make his music less easy to hear and therefore more expensive - more 'upmarket'. However, when combined with his educational aims, his position is obviously contradictory. For whilst expressing concern about the narrow social range of students at Bennington he is at the same time selling his music at a price that only they can afford. A direct relationship with the community is out of the question.

Paul Bley, by contrast, believes in being in the thick of the market place not in some refined corner. He believes in economic struggle, free enterprise, the survival of the fittest. Financial problems, he feels, gird the artist into action and stop him wasting time on ideas that have no future.

> Part of the measure of an artist is the speed at which he works. The person who discovered relativity second wasn't <u>fast</u> enough, not wasn't <u>bright</u> enough...
>
> Art resembles the period it exists in. If it takes you ten years, you'll be dealing with historical material. There's more room in a new art form at the beginning, the corners haven't all been taken, there's room for individuality. If you get to it late, it's been done loud, quiet, fast, slow, what you do will be redundant. When

> you get a recording of someone playing piccolo in a style, you know that the style is over. The information has been digested by everybody.

Paul Bley was born in 1932 in Montreal and by the early 50s had become a local hero. He was leader of a jazz workshop which presented local groups and visiting stars from New York (who he says were there for instructional purposes). He spent two years studying music at Juilliard in New York and then led a group in California which included the major innovator of the early 60s, Ornette Coleman. Returning to New York he worked with Charlie Mingus and Sonny Rollins, and led his own groups. He took part in the October Revolution and joined the Jazz Composers' Guild soon after it started. On practically every issue he took a view diametrically opposed to Bill Dixon.

> Paul Bley: The problems with organisations is that they usually rest on the will-power of one individual... if he leaves nothing happens. That's exactly what happened to our organsiation (in Montreal) as soon as I left...
>
> Before we get into the Guild I would like to say a few negative things about organisations- musicians' collectives rather. A musicians' collective just shows the poverty of the success of the individuals at the time. Because the free enterprise system is much better for promoting art than the grant situation. The free enterprise system can produce revenue per energy - the grant system is a sporadic occasional thing.....
>
> There's some utility in exchanging information but if none of the members of the collective have been able to continue proceeding in a rapid manner then the meagre scraps of information that they have collectively won't improve their position in any dramatic way...
>
> People choose to play with one another on the basis of their ability.
>
> A collective would most probably encourage <u>over</u>-socialisation, <u>over</u>-fraternalisation, <u>over</u>-democracy in which you have the poorest players playing with the best players. It's not the best way to get the music along quickly....

It soon became clear that Bley was obsessed with progress and speed. He feels the artist needs to continually think up new ideas and then test them against the market place to see if they are worth pursuing or not. If not the idea should be discarded.

> The collectives might be a way of preserving a style that didn't deserve to be preserved to that extent...
>
> I see them as a last resort - there are many things prior to collectives and you can make your progress much quicker. If you accept the philosophy that grant-getting is a good thing then of course collectives have their raison d'etre... So we'd better just talk in terms of the business value of collectives because I think the musical value is nil.
>
> My suggestion is for every musician to make their own collective. Preferably not with other musicians. The Japanese for example. A musical artist has a group around him of apprentices. You don't need twelve more like you, you need a lot of other people to make your work go faster.

WM: You think a musician should be the leader of a hierarchy?

PB: Assigned by that player. You don't need democracy, you just need progress. The life of the organisation is not going to be infinite.

WM: So was the Jazz Composers' Guild a last resort?

PB: No. On the contrary it was a unique organisation because it was an organisation of people whose careers were already - and of the 14 members some people's careers were more advanced than others. It was an organisation of recording artists. I'd already been a recording artist for a long time. That was the uniqueness of it, so there was a great deal of optimism connected with the fact that we had so many skills together under one roof, that we should be able to make a multiple of ourselves....

WM: Do you see it as a collective?

PB: Bill saw it as a family of his friends. And if he wasn't friendly with anyone at a particular time it was ruled by dictate.

WM: Bill Dixon implied that John Coltrane could have been the one person to draw the organisation together.

PB: That may have been one of his hidden desires that no one ever heard of - maybe after the fact. At the time Coltrane wasn't a highly regarded player. He still

isn't. He's highly regarded more like an Art Tatum - that is as a genius instrumentalist, but playing on one note, on one centre is a waste of time after Ornette and obviously a dead end from a musical point of view. It's now taken up by the rock groups, but at some point people will realise that one is one is one is one.

Progress could be measured in musical terms as well as market terms, then, but for Bley it is actually the market place that stimulates the musical progress.

WM: So are you saying there's a kind of educated jazz or improvised music audience whose taste you're willing to accept in deciding which music should survive and develop?

PB: Well it's not as ideal as that. It would be lovely if the audience really knew as much as the players. Unfortunately the players are professional and the audience may be part time.

WM: What do you think of the JCG recording boycott?

PB: As I said earlier you have players at different stages in their careers. A procedure which was useful for a man with 30 albums may be totally unuseful for a player with 3 albums. To ask the two men to behave in the same manner is an unnatural request, so it's naive to think that that idea's feasible. Another one of Bill Dixon's genius ideas! The man was an idiot - you could tell that by his musical output.

WM: I've never heard that much of his music because he doesn't...

PB: Exactly my point. If he'd liked it enough he'd have done it more often. Somebody's worth is almost nil if nobody likes it save him. If you don't like your work obviously you're wasting everybody's time....

Bill Dixon's idea of recording collectively is ridiculous. First of all you can't economically substitute for the revenue that people are used to from recording to make such a boycott. Secondly the problem as he saw it didn't exist. It wasn't a question of the mass of the corporations taking the music of this body of players and merchandising and giving them an unfair share of revenue. Neil Diamond was maybe getting an unfair share of his revenue or

> Perry Como, or whoever it was that was selling 90% of all records being sold. They're not sold by a small charter. We had no power collectively or individually in terms of sales in the market place, so they had no argument with the majors. It was a ridiculous idea. If Impulse decided to hire 12 artists and give someone a great deal of front money because an A & R man convinced the president it was a good idea, that is something you don't want to stop. Because Impulse will stop it as soon as they see their books in 12 months....
>
> In any case obviously no-one agreed with it because they continued to record. Archie Shepp had a strong contract at that time, Pharoah Sanders did. Those people that were between contracts loved the idea.

Whereas Dixon had been arguing that the market place should respond to artistic value in itself Bley took a more realistic economic outlook. Not surprisingly he differed from Dixon on the subject of race too, but on this Bley took a more naive view.

WM: Was there racial tension in the organisation?

PB: The thing was such that for 15 years prior to that the relationships were first rate....

> Unfortunately, being one of the 4 White people in the group it was difficult for me to live with the pain with my friends who were in pain because the Black players I knew prior to that didn't regard themselves as being in a painful situation, they regarded themselves as being in a joyous situation. It was when the musicians began to adopt a social consciousness that they had their own workloads to pursue over and above the greater financial reward of a group of musicians.
>
> But this came really after the life of the organisation. It was part of the climate that existed at the time. But it wasn't really talked about.

Although this statement is a bit confusing, Bley seems to be saying that the rise of Black consciousness amongst musicians was based on a misguided opportunist mentality rather than on their true situation and that this diverted them from the important task of making money.

I suggested to him that if he disagreed so strongly with the political stance of the JCG it was surprising that he had even joined, let alone stayed with it through to the end.

PB: I was the only one that had any experience. I made every meeting. I tried to see that some of the better ideas were implemented. Served as a general buffer between naive ideas and the hostile reaction to them.

In the end Bley returned to the idea that the failure of the organisation was largely caused by the rigidity of Dixon's ideas.

> Bill maintains that he left the organisation because some of the players started working so he must have had a very fixed set of ideas about what constituted the life of the organisation - if it didn't fit rules A, B, C, D, E then he would leave and it would obviously terminate the life of the organisation....
>
> Bill came to the meeting before the final meeting and said that he wanted the organisation back. Most of the dirty work had been done by Roswell Rudd and myself and we said 'Fine Bill'. He said 'We'll have the meeting at my house, is everyone agreed?' I said, 'Well, that means you're taking responsibility for the meeting, you're going to see that the work's been done...' He said 'No problem - my house next Thursday'.
>
> It never happened. After months of meeting that was the meeting that terminated the organisation - the one that didn't happen.

But more than the simple rigidity of Dixon's views, Bley thought they were particularly unsuited to the time and place.

> You can't have a boycott with 12 groups. You're in New York. Why stop at 12? I suggested more, but not everybody was prepared to throw out their recording career for the privilege of attending a Bill Dixon meeting.
>
> There were two boycotts planned - that of Bill Dixon and that of the record companies. Bill Dixon decided to boycott the record companies and they decided to boycott everybody. There's a hole in the recording of jazz between the death of the JCG and the turn of the decade... It's the fault of

> the English - you had a group that changed the popular music and attracted the young performers. So everyone tried to become a lyricist instead of trying to become the world's greatest improvising artist.

The JCG simply didn't have the power in the market place that it needed for its tactics to succeed. This was a time when rock music was beginning to totally dominate the commercial record companies, and there was no way that a small group of jazz musicians could oppose it in any substantial way. Bley was willing to negotiate these changes in the market structure and accept the hole in the recording of jazz. But this is certainly one clear instance where the wider availability of subsidy could have helped the music artistically in a positive way.

With his pioneering spirit and love of free enterprise, Bley abandoned acoustic music in the late 60s and did some innovative work using electronics and synthesizers (with Annette Peacock). In the early seventies as the climate changed he returned to the acoustic piano at the suggestion of record producer Manfred Eicher and concentrated on solo performances. Then in 1974 Bley started his own record company which he aptly named 'Improvising Artists Incorporated'. This capitalised on the large private collection of tapes he had accumulated in the previous fifteen years. These included rare live performances by Ornette Coleman and Charlie Parker as well as a whole series of studio tapes which Bley had made at his own expense. These he issues as well as newly recorded sessions by different musicians. At the moment it is a profitable enterprise. He scorns the maximum $5000 grant available from the National Endowment for the Arts saying that he can make that amount of money "in as many weeks". His next plan is to keep up with the market by issuing video-cassettes as well as records. (They already use images made by video-synthesizers on their record sleeves). He continues working as a pianist as well.

iii) Developments

The Jazz Composers' Guild, then, was lacking in unity. Not only internally but in its public face as well. For instance Dixon openly discussed the racial tension within the Guild in the one interview that appeared in Down Beat.

> "For example" he said, "even in the guild, which is comprised of some very intelligent people, there has been a subtle, but apparent, indignation on the part of the white members (and that is something I think that nearly all white men have in them) that a black man... myself, Cecil... could conceive and execute an idea that would be intelligent and beneficial to all".

Down Beat 6/5/65 p.17.

The AACM experienced racial tensions too, in fact some members actually left over the issue of whether they should have white members or not, but for Dixon to actually charge the white members with racism in a public statement like this suggests that he wasn't even seeking unity.

One important difference from the AACM was that there was no musical unity or collectively on which to base the political unity. The JCG was a collection of individuals who had come to New York to succeed. They had already made the decision. Most of them were firmly settled in their styles and by 1964 many of their names were well-known - Archie Shepp, John Tchicai, Cecil Taylor, Mike Mantler, Carla Bley, Roswell Rull, Paul Bley, Sun Ra, Bill Dixon, Burton Greene, Jon Winter, Gary Peacock, Pharoah Sanders, Albert Ayler. Although, as I said, they could all be classified as avant-garde in one way or another, they had developed very different styles and worked from all sorts of philosophical bases. As an example Sun Ra said about Shepp and Taylor:

> They were doing their thing, but they were not talking about Space or Intergalactic things.....

> (as was Sun Ra). They were talking about Avant Garde and the New Thing.
>
> quoted in Jost, Free Jazz, p.18.

This diversity made collective unity very difficult.

I would like to return to Bley's statement that each musician should have his own collective, because this is what many of the Guild members actually did. They formed separate organisations which in certain senses worked collectively but of which, nevertheless, they were still the leader. Dixon's school project and Bley's record company can both be seen like this. Sun Ra had always run his Arkestra like this. It was a bigband, living and working communally with Sun Ra as the spiritual leader and inspiring force. John Tchicai returned to his native Denmark where he formed a large orchestra mainly of young musicians called 'Cadentia Nova Danica'. Carla Bley and Mike Mantler formed the Jazz Composers' Guild Orchestra which included all the members, and then kept it going as the Jazz Composers Orchestra Association. This eventually became an administrative structure for receiving grants, and they were able to commission musicians to write music and form a band to play and record it. This was later extended to include the New Music Distribution Service which distributed new music records of all kinds.

In general the New York scene has developed in a way that most of the functions that could have been provided by the Guild have been taken over by individuals. This applies especially to musicians lofts and to the small record companies. A number of musicians started both. Ornette Coleman was the first to open his loft in the Soho area south of Greenwich Village, and many followed suit including Sam Rivers, Joe Lee Wilson, Warren Smith and others. Primarily they were places to play and listen.

Admission charges were low compared to nightclubs and the surroundings often basic. Some of them were also able to procure grants for supporting their activities. The drummer Rashied Ali has obtained a licence to run a bar at his 'Ali's Alley' and he maintains that there is nothing collective about it. "It is about me" he said, "self-reliance". He argues that in New York many musicians are forming pseudo-collectives merely to make it easier to get grants and not for any reasons of principle. Ali is also one of the musicians who has started his own record company, Survival Records. The name speaks for itself. In common with most of the other musicians Ali has realised that in the long term it is more fruitful to build up an alternative structure designed to suit the nature of the music, rather than trying to force a better deal out of organisations with purely commercial objectives. Many other musicians have published their own records and there are also several small companies run by enthusiasts who record the music. The climate is constantly changing and it seems that one or two larger companies are again showing more interest in the music. However, even if this trend continues, musicians have now learnt that it is impossible to rely on the market place for economic and artistic sustenance and the tradition of self-reliance is firmly implanted so that it can always be called upon when needed.

In an environment where the market place makes specific offers, then, there is an underlying competitiveness between musicians, and this explains the dominance of individualism in the ways that musicians have found of opposing or sidestepping the market place. But there have also been other collective organisations in New York such as the Jazz and People's Movement, Collective Black Artists and Strata East. Valerie Wilmer gives a useful account of these in her book As Serious As Your Life, but these have basically been concert promoting arganisations (Strata East was concerned mainly with records) and none have managed to combine professional and community concerns in the way the AACM has. Wilmer also mentions the various organisations

involved in community work in New York such as the University of the Streets and various drug rehabilitation programmes that use music.

iv) The New Muse

Half an hour's ride on the subway from Manhattan, in Brooklyn, there is a Black community centre called the New Muse which comes nearest to combining the two aspects. As well as mounting exhibitions and concerts and showing films, they offer a wide range of classes in music and the other arts.

The concerts are often combined with lectures and discussions led by musicians. At one of the concerts I went to in January 1978 the band playing was Brass Proud which consists of eight trumpet players with piano, bass and drums. Although the music was disappointing in some ways since it kept mainly to the traditional format of theme followed by solos followed by a repeat of the theme, the actual sensual enjoyment of hearing eight trumpets played together was great. The audience were nearly all from the local Black community and were obviously enjoying it a lot.

The concert programme is largely based around musicians who live in Brooklyn and there seems to be a strong relationship with the community. The music director is the bass player Reggie Workman, well known both for his playing and for his involvement with Collective Black Artists. At this concert two of the trumpet players Malachi Thompson and Kamal Alim led the discussion.

Thompson's talk was called Black Music and the Media and was mainly an attack on the radio stations. He suggested that by concentrating on mindless disco music.the radio stations actually work as a repressive force and that they should be pressurised to play more music "on a higher spiritual level". He pointed out that this led to the situation where musicians such as Reggie Workman and Olu Dara (who were both present) had to go to Europe to earn money.

Kamil Alim spoke on Black Music History and emphasised the importance of preserving the history of Black music - "the

music and our whole culture is in jeopardy - We may go the same way as the American Indian - There are no museums to preserve our culture - We must do it ourselves". The word "jazz" itself Alim said was a white word and white musicians were often given erroneous titles such as Paul Whiteman - king of swing, Gato Barbieri - no. 1 sax, Maynard Ferguson - no. 1 trumpet. "Our music expresses our lifestyle and is a historic documentation of our past. We must get away from categorisation and call it 'Black music'. Music should be given the title of its creators".

The discussion that followed was interesting because it gradually focussed on the tension between community aims and professional aims. One person asked how Black musicians who went to Europe could be helping their community. Thompson answered that it was an economic necessity for them because many of them were "literally starving". Nevertheless, he said, the really dedicated musicians should stay in the community. "I'm still here!" said Kalim.

The discussion went on to the sorts of ways that musicians could work closer to the community. Was it possible to work from within by putting meaningful lyrics into disco music? Was it possible to dance to jazz? Why did people seem to prefer dancing to records rather than live bands?

It was a good discussion with many people taking part and it certainly seemed to raise very pertinent questions even if the didactic tone of the musicians occasionally caused some irritation to the audience.

Brooklyn, then, is able to support a sort of activity that would be totally inappropriate in downtown Manhattan and it is a different sort of musician who becomes involved. Although I

said at the beginning that New York is where you go if you want to succeed it would have been more accurate to say the southern part of Manhattan, especially Greenwich Village and SoHo, and it is still true that, as in the days of the JCG, individualism is a strong force on the musicians. However, Brooklyn is only half an hour from Manhattan and there are many musicians who are part of both worlds. In some cases, as Valerie Wilmer points out, the community work provides a better opportunity to make a living than does a pure involvement in musical performances and it is possible for the individual musician to work out some sort of balance between the two, weighing up the possibilities for rewarding work and economic stability in each world. And at least there is a precedent for collective action for musicians to build from.

However, there are still important differences between the collectivism as displayed in the various community projects in New York and that of the AACM. The most important of these is economic. The New York projects are all heavily subsidised, and the set up is that they are employing professional musicians to work in the community, whereas in Chicago the musicians have kept the school going on a voluntary basis for 15 years. In functional terms it could be argued that the end result is the same, in that the quality of teaching doesn't depend on whether the teacher is being paid or not, but overall it must indicate a difference in attitude amongst the musicians and hence a different meaning.

PART 3 - ENGLAND

CHAPTER 5

Introduction

The overall context of the discussion of jazz in America was the different pressures of the Black community and tradition, the market place and the inner needs of the artist. I showed how these pressures were reflected in the co-operative organisations and in the music. I also showed in some cases how the music actually expresses these pressures. The pressures represented relationships between different classes and social groups, but all were geographically close to each other - within the boundaries of the United States. The music could therefore be understood in general as being a normal part of society. It could be encountered easily in day to day activity. Throughout the history of jazz in the USA the form and content of the music itself could be said to express its own relationship to the society, as we saw especially clearly in the Chicago chapter.

In England and Europe in general this was not the case. The music was something from outside. It was foreign and exotic. A new world.

In this chapter I want to show how this simple fact has been reflected in the development of jazz in Britain and how the pressures and forces which shape the music have been different and have thus given it a different social meaning.

I start by describing a few historical moments which illustrate the way jazz was received on its introduction to England and how a serious following grew up in parallel with the mass market that developed. Then, in the section headed 'Emulation' I discuss the way English musicians started to play jazz themselves and some of the contradictions caused by their

geographical distance from the source of the music. This leads on to a discussion of the development of the concept of a specifically 'English jazz'. These issues are then brought together by contrasting music which is rooted directly in a community and music which is rooted indirectly through the mediation of the gramophone. I illustrate this difference by comparing two versions of the song, Take This Hammer.

i) History

France had a foretaste of the music when some of the American military bands such as the one led by James Reese Europe played all over the country at the end of the first world war. Although the music wasn't actually jazz, being completley scored out, it used much of the language of jazz both in terms of instrumental techniques and sounds and in terms of the rhythmic accents. Many of the musicians were jazz musicians, and this gave Jim Europe certain problems:

> With the brass instruments we put in mutes and make a whirling motion with the tongue, at the same time blowing full pressure. With wind instruments we pinch the mouthpiece and blow hard. This produces the peculiar sound which you all know. To us it is not discordant.... we accent strongly in this manner the notes which originally would be without accent. It is natural for us to do this; it is, indeed, a racial musical characteristic. I have to call a daily rehearsal of my band to prevent the musicians from adding to their music more than I wish them to. Whenever possible they all embroider their parts in order to produce new, peculiar sounds.

J. Europe, quoted by E. Southern, The Music of Black Americans, p.365.

The response was overwhelming wherever the band played. For a public used to the British Grenadiers and their French equivalent, the music was startlingly new and rich. French musicians reacted strongly too as Eileen Southern, historian of Black music reports:

> The bandsmen of the French Garde Republicaine were so impressed by the sound of Europe's band that they borrowed his orchestrations in order to try to duplicate the sound. When their efforts were unsuccessful, they insisted upon examining the musical instruments of the black bandsmen, thinking perhaps that the instruments were different.

Southern, p.365.

England went without this foretaste of jazz, but well before 1919, when visits by the Original Dixieland Jazz Band and by Will Marian Cook's Southern Syncopated Orchestra marked the first 'official' exposure of the English public to jazz, they had already become at least acquainted with other forms of American music.

As early as 1843, American minstrel shows were visiting Britain and stimulating British artists to combine their grotesque caricatures of Southern Negro plantation life and attitudes with the developing traditions of the Victorian music hall and drawing room songs. Most of the visiting American troupes were white and the music probably had very little to do with Black music. However, British audiences were able to hear a genuine form of Black music, albeit in a refined concert version, when the Fisk Jubilee Singers visited London and Edinburgh. These were a group of Black students who were touring the world singing spirituals to raise money for the Negro University, Fisk in Tennessee.

> They drew crowds of 7,000 at Mr. Spurgen's Tabernacle in London, at the Corn Exchange, Edinburgh; and at a concert for the Freedmen's Missions Aids Society, in 1873, "the dense audience rose to their feet, hats and handkerchiefs waved in the air, and the deafening applause was kept up until the singers answered with 'God Save the Queen'".
>
> Edward Lee, Music of the People, p.112.

However, their success can't be viewed as the beginning of the new general enthusiasm for American music that developed in the 20th Century since, as Edward Lee points out, it was caused primarily by religious feelings.

It was not until the early 1900s, when the dance hall began to rival the music-hall as an entertainment medium that a purely secular interest in Black music began to develop. This was in the form of ragtime music and the various dance crazes

that were associated with it, starting with the Cakewalk in 1906 and soon followed by the Turkey Trot, the Bunny Hug and the Foxtrot.

The first world war put a temporary halt on the influence but after the war, stimulated both by visiting bands and by records, Britain was soon into the 'jazz age' of the 1920s. More than anything jazz seemed to fit the desperate optimism brought about by the end of the war.

> Given this situation, some historians have suggested that if jazz had not appeared on the scene when it did, it would have been necessary to invent it. The joke ignores the fact that this is just what happened. The "jazz age" preceded any understanding of jazz by several years. The jazz which existed before 1920 was much less the product of New Orleans than the creation of that new concept of the age of mass communication: publicity. Jazz, or whatever people thought was jazz, was the answer to a press agent's prayer, and to that extent much of it was invented by men who had nothing to do with music at all.
>
> Chris Goddard, Jazz Away From Home, p.21.

Goddard has documented how jazz spread in Britain partly through American musicians playing in British bands and vice versa, so that practical experience was acquired. However, the number of instances he gives of this is small and although significant in terms of the better known recording bands, it took a long time for the influence to filter through to lesser known bands. Edward Lee has pointed out the fact that jazz didn't make an instant take-over of British popular music as is sometimes assumed:

> At the same time the catholicity of taste of the average listener must be emphasised. The older styles were still accepted, and the old instruments still played. The violin and cello were still found in dance

> bands, and music which would now be called "Palm Court" was still widely popular. One of the most famous popular English singers from the end of the decade onwards was Gracie Fields, "the singing millgirl". The voice of the "lass from Rochdale" could hardly be described as "jazzy".
>
> E. Lee The Music of the People. p.138-9.

The jazz age of the 20s then, was dominated by the more commercial forms of jazz mainly played by white musicians. However, there was also the possibility for some of the players who have since been recognised as 'jazz greats' to be heard. For example, The Southern Syncopated Orchestra that visited in 1919 included Sydney Bechet and he made a strong impression. Events like this could be picked up on by enthusiastic listeners and musicians and traced back to recordings of hot jazz coming out of America. Nevertheless, Francis Newton writes that it was not until the end of the twenties that any significant number of Europeans became sufficiently interested in authentic jazz to be able to clearly separate them from the commercial jazz following.

> At the tailend of the 'twenties, however, we observe the tiny beginnings of an expansion of the thoroughbred jazz among small obscure and untypical communities in Europe, and to a much lesser extent, in America. The imported gramophone records of white New York musicians, and later of the great coloured players, were almost entirely responsible - in Europe at least - for the creation of these small groups of devotees.
>
> F. Newton, The Jazz Scene, p.63.

As Newton notes, the existence of these groups meant that during the depression some jazz records were made purely for the European market since the American market for uncommercial jazz between 1930 and 1934 was non-existent. Here, therefore, was the first clear influence of Europe on the course of jazz history.

ii) Emulation

As far as playing jazz goes, British musicians could only start by emulating the Americans as Charles Fox has pointed out:

> No doubt the process started soon after the Original Dixieland Jazz Band reached these shores in 1919; certainly it has gone on ever since. And while recordings by American musicians have naturally exerted the strongest, most pervading influence upon the sound and shape of British jazz, the personal example - the visit of American bands most of all - has always had a powerful effect. In 1932, for instance, Louis Armstrong set scores of youthful trumpet-players reaching for notes they could never hope to hit. The following year Duke Ellington left brass players all over Britain choking their horns with plunger mutes, and echoes of Cootie Williams and Tricky Sam Nanton floated out of dance-halls all the way from Penzance to Lossiemouth.
>
> The ban upon American musicians coming to play in Britain - a ban which remained in force from 1935 up to the time Stan Kenton's orchestra flew into London in 1956 - soon put a stop to that. For just over twenty years most British jazz musicians - pianists and singers excepted - had to rely entirely upon gramophone records and the radio to find out what the Americans were up to. The immediate catalytic thrill of actually seeing as well as hearing the American musicians became a luxury enjoyed only by those canny enough to fix themselves up with jobs aboard transatlantic liners.
>
> C. Fox, 'Raising of the Standard' in Just Jazz 2, pp.127-8.

This ban on visiting musicians had a profound effect on the British scene, putting a far greater emphasis on the music in an objectified form, the record, and separating musicians from any coherent idea of the ongoing development of the music. When they were exposed to the new music in the later 1950s, Fox found that many musicians were still anxious to emulate:

> Since Joe Morello visited Britain with Dave Brubeck, the cult of under-statement has

> found its way into the solos of many local drummers. What has not accompanied it, however, is the subtle, compelling swing that Morello always created.
>
> ibid. p.133.

This (if it is true) shows an over-reaction on the part of British drummers, presumably arising from their ignorance of the international scene and a concomitant desire to be instantly hip.

In the case of George Lewis's visit the time factor was more complicated, for Lewis was one of the American musicians widely recorded in the 40s as part of the American revival of New Orleans music from the early 20s, (he had been playing in New Orleans for many years, unnoticed by the outside world), and he became one of the heroes of the British revivalists in the 50s.

> (His) visit to this country in the spring of 1957 should have given some of the revivalist bands a shot in the arm. Nearly all it did, however, was to prove that Lewis in the flesh is a far better clarinettist than he has ever sounded on his recordings. His tone and phrasing seemed far more modern than anybody here had suspected and those clarinettists who had modelled their playing upon his records suddenly found themselves sounding curiously old-fashioned compared with their idol.
>
> ibid. p.133.

In this case it could be said that George Lewis's records had in general been misunderstood. His playing on them had been taken as a definitive classical style and was given the status of a dogma. His playing was actually held up by British jazz fans and musicians as how you ought to play, whereas in fact it had been a passing moment in a long career and musical development, which just happened to have been documented on record.

Thus, in spite of the various electronic communication media, British jazz has often been very out of step historically with American jazz, and there has been a tendency for listeners to be overawed by great performances from the past, heard on records. This could lead to curious feuds between different sections of the jazz community best exemplified in the battles between traditionalists and modernists in the 1950s.

During this period the jazz scene became more polarised than at any other in the history of British jazz. The differences carried right through from the music itself to attitudes towards audiences and even to modes of dress. The traditionalists were to a large extent dedicated amateurs (although especially during the 'boom' many were full time), they played enjoyable music unpretentiously, dressed informally and presented their music towards the audience. Humphrey Lyttleton has said that the trad revival must be understood partly as a trad discovery since most of the people involved were hearing the music for the first time, having been brought up on 1930s swing and its derivatives. So in this sense they claimed to be rescuing the 'true', 'pure' jazz from commercialisation. However, whilst claiming to be upholding spontaneity and creativity some of the players would take their emulation as far as actually copying improvised solos from records and even dressing like their heroes.

The modernists, by contrast, were attacking commercialism from the other side by placing a heavy emphasis on technical sophistication, playing their music for themselves rather than the audience (who were often considered unhip) and by projecting a hip, exclusive image through dressing in suits and thin ties, speaking in an American derived slang, and in some cases using addictive drugs.

The ridiculousness of this antagonism is obvious from the fact that both groups were playing a highly derivative music based on different periods of the same music's history. Neither side

could claim great originality except in the case of a few individuals making a creative reinterpretation of the idiom. In fact, even the conflict was derived from the USA. By 1958 Humphrey Lyttelton was able to argue (optimistically) that the two sides were coming closer together because of an increasing awareness of tradition on the part of the modernists and he hoped that a unified body of work would emerge which could be called 'jazz' without qualifications ('The Common Denominator' in Just Jazz). Lyttelton's contribution to this was through modernising his own band by including saxophones and eventually bebop style soloists, and using arranging styles that derived from the 1930s rather than the 1920s. In fact his aim was partly to take jazz away from its concentration on the moment in order to maintain its character as an "urban folk music" (his term), accessible to all and capable of expressing common feelings.

This may have happened to a limited extent, but in general, this function was taken by other forms of music such as skiffle in the late 50s. There has been no ongoing stream of music which would aptly fit Lyttelton's concept of urban folk music.

For the younger jazz musicians, this issue became irrelevant in the 60s as more and more of them found the self-confidence to develop their own original styles relatively independently of American jazz, and thus create a distinctive British jazz.

> Once jazz began to be performed, the creation of a valid tradition was only a matter of time. In Britain it resulted in a number of gifted individuals, among them the vibraphonist Victor Feldman, the clarinettist Sandy Brown, and the drummer Phil Seamen, but not until the 1960s was there an upsurge of gifted players in any quantity. It could now be argued that the British baritone saxophonist John Surman is equal, if not superior, to any American, while the fact that in 1968 Miles Davis chose a British bassist, Dave Holland, to work in his Quintet is another indication of the progress that has been made.

Charles Fox, Jazz in Perspective, pp.75-6.

The question as to whether there was actually a distinctive style of British jazz as opposed to a number of gifted individuals was often a matter of conjecture amongst writers on the subject. Discussions often still revolved around the style of one or two influential bands rather than the emergence of a common style particularly suited to British society. For example in 1958 David Boulton devoted his whole chapter on 'The Englishness of English Jazz' (obviously echoing Pevsner on art) to 'The Englishness of Chris Barber's band'. After describing how Barber took influences both from New Orleans bands and from Duke Ellington he summarised his importance:

> But it was - and is today - the distinctive style of arrangement associated with the band which clears them of the charge of musical plagiarism. In this, Barber has learned from Morton and Ellington and has not been afraid to apply his lessons in an original and individual way, so that his band has a sound which is quite unmistakable <u>and quite different from that of the Negro groups which have provided most of the inspiration</u> for British traditionalists.
>
> D. Boulton, <u>Jazz in Britain</u>, p.109.
> (emphasis in original.)

For Boulton, Barber's 'Englishness' was proved by his influence:

> ... the characteristics which we have associated with Chris Barber's Jazz Band have been appropriated by scores of traditional bands all over Britain. The bands of Terry Lightfoot, Alex Welsh, Bobby Mickleburgh and Eric Silk have learned as much from Barber as from Oliver, and a whole host of amateur groups are striving after the Barber sound.
>
> <u>ibid</u>. p.110.

Boulton doesn't analyse exactly what it is that is <u>English</u> about this music but sums up, in a way that probably would have seemed ominous to some, by suggesting other influences

that might be brought into English jazz.

> ... (The British style) exists because jazz, having found itself in a new environment, played by and for people with a new background, must of necessity be changed. The Englishness which permeates the music of Purcell, Boyd, Sullivan, Elgar, Delius and Vaughan Williams will find its way into jazz, do what we can to prevent it. And Britons never shall be squares.
>
> ibid. p.110.

In a way the situation which Boulton describes was the limit to which 'Englishness' could go in the context of British traditional jazz, for he was seeking a distinct identity in a style whose very essence was derivative. He can thus only define Englishness in terms of our own classical tradition.

Of course, there is a wry humour in his prognosis since the idea of a straight combination of the staidness of the English romantic tradition, (and its chauvinism where it exists) with the hipness and down to earth directness of the jazz tradition (and its internationalism) seems laughable. Hence his last sentence.

Nevertheless, he is suggesting that in some way these two traditions will be combined, in whatever transformation.

This could be considered one element that was present in some of the English jazz that developed in the 1960s. There were two essential elements that Boulton hadn't forseen. Firstly, an ongoing relationship with the developing American tradition, the Black avant-garde. Secondly, the development of a community of jazz musicians in England, especially London, who were influenced by Black jazz but were also confident enough of their own creativity to mutually influence and inspire each other (in contrast to the one way influence which Boulton describes for Chris Barber). They were thus able to create a

new Englishness rather than simply dig up parts of the English classical tradition. Developing in London in the middle and late 1960s it was of a deeper and more alive kind than before, and there was a blossoming of musical creativity during this period.

So, for example, while part of baritone saxophonist John Surman's identity was obviously defined and influenced by the playing of John Coltrane, just as important as this was the 'scene' in which he was involved, which comprised a relatively independent community of musicians developing their own music.

The overall scene at that time can't be easily characterised but there were certain elements and particular people who helped to give English jazz a distinctive character, and take it further away from the American model. These included:

Mike Westbrook, who led a big band in the late 60s, was one of the first to attack the hip image of the modern jazzmen. He did this by incorporating a large range of influences into the music including pop songs from the 30s, many simple tunes based on riffs and free improvisation. The band was made up completely of musicians with strong personal identities and while Westbrook can't really be described as a musical innovator his role was vital in helping redefine the stance of musicians towards the music they played. Whatever the style, the music was played with a high spirited conviction and sincerity which attacked the exclusiveness often implied by modern jazz.

The Blue Notes, a group from South Africa including Chris McGregor, Dudu Pukwana, Mongesi Feza, Louis Moholo and Johnny Dyani settled in London in 1966 and presented a blend of avant-garde jazz with traditional and modern African music. Whilst not being English, it strongly suggested the possibility of doing more than copying American music.

AMM was an early improvisation group that used electronics

extensively but was most important in that it combined the jazz backgrounds of Lou Gare and Eddie Prevost with the straight background of Cornelius Cardew. It thus brought together the idiomatic improvisation of jazz with the aleatoric, chance improvisation which had been developed by John Cage and some of his followers.

The Spontaneous Music Ensemble, led by John Stevens, was important for developing a form of group improvisations which deliberately reduced the importance of individual contributions in favour of the overall collective sound.

In general, at this stage, the intensity of American music was preserved, but this was in conjunction with a different concept of sound. There was a tendency towards a cleaner sound without the blues influences of American music. This was reflected too in some of the compositions by jazz musicians at that time. The music of Keith Tippett, John Surman and Mike Gibbs tended towards a clean conception of harmony using bright major chords and a romanticism reminiscent of some English straight composers. At the same time the music was opening itself up to the influence of pop and rock music. Rhythmically and harmonically too. Importantly, attitudes of commitment were shared with experimental rock musicians. A hardworking freshness of approach replaced the cool and often cynical professionalism of the bebop musicians.

iii) Roots

I have some hesitation in placing the music of the two English collectives solely in the context of the jazz tradition and American Black music because in many ways neither of them can be considered straightforward extensions of that tradition. As we shall see, they have brought in many other influences. However, I think my approach is justified because in their formative years many of the musicians took the very typical approach of initially becoming interested in pop music by English musicians with a very strong American influence and then tracing the lines of influence back through the available records to the Black American source.

In fact, my own interest in jazz followed this pattern. I was first attracted by the music of the English singer Georgie Fame in the early 60s who I soon discovered actually based his music on very blatant copies of American singers Mose Allison and the vocal group Lambert, Hendricks and Ross. From Mose Allison it was a simple step to the country blues music of people such as Big Bill Broonzy and Sonny Terry and Brownie McGhee. Lambert, Hendricks and Ross led straight to the music of the Count Basie band, with whom they sang and then to the whole jazz tradition - Charlie Parker, Miles Davis, Charlie Mingus and so on. All this was achieved, of course, without leaving Cambridge, England.

When analysed like this, it looks strange, but our culture is so dominated by records and by American influences that the experience itself doesn't seem strange at all. Evan Parker, one of the members of the Musicians' Co-operative describes his experience:

> My roots are in my record player.
>
> It (the tradition) has never been elsewhere for me, of course. The experience is in your head, which is not elsewhere. You put a record on and it comes to you and is processed inside your head, it doesn't matter where the music comes from. So for me it's like my ability to internalise, that is to make use of, material from foreign places.

Parker was born in 1944, and when he started being interested in music in the late 1950s skiffle was the pop music of the time.

> I was absolutely fanatical about Lonnie Donegan. I just had everything that he ever recorded. I knew all the words and was very interested in that kind of music. I'd read that he was influenced by Leadbelly so I went into that. At that time there were two 10-inch LPs on Melodisc of Leadbelly and I think I heard the difference. I think that in a way I preferred the Donegan versions though in another way I knew the others were more important. It was just a question of allowing myself to mature to the point where I would feel it as well as understand the importance of it. There was very little of that stuff around. You could get one or two things on Tempo. There was Sonny Terry, Brownie McGhee... Josh White. You had to take what you could get... It was all single records really. One record was enough to lead you to Leadbelly and that was enough to make me check out the whole of the blues that was available which was about 7 or 8 records.

quoted by I. Carr, Music Outside, pp.71-2.

If one were confronted by the two men in their full social context the jump between them would be extreme. Lonnie Donegan, young English pop singer with a 'boy next door' image, started by singing with jazz bands and then branched out into 'all round entertainment' playing, for example the role of Wishee Washee in Aladdin, the Chiswick pantomine, 1957. Leadbelly, Black singer and guitarist, jailed for murder in 1917 at the age of 33. After a hard life travelling and singing he was eventually accepted by middle class audiences in Greenwich Village shortly before he died in 1949.

However, on a record they are both the same thing: recording artists. The only difference is in the actual sound they make. Parker implied that he knew Leadbelly was better than Lonnie Donegan but didn't quite know why. It is worth pausing to make a comparison between the two.

The traditional song Take This Hammer is well known and is useful for comparison. There are many differences between their two versions. The first obvious one is their actual voices. Both have fairly high voices, but whereas Leadbelly's is high and rich in tone presumably partly from working for years without a microphone, Donegan's has a more whiny nasal tone. In the way they sing the songs there is a big difference too. Leadbelly's approach is of stark simplicity. The song has a simple beauty to it, being based around the rhythm of hammering rocks, although with some irregularity to the rhythm.

Take this hammer, take it to the captain,
Take this hammer, take it to the captain,
Take this hammer, take it to the captain,
Tell him that I'm gone, tell him that I'm gone.

The only decoration in the melody is on the third repeat of 'captain' when the melody rises a tone. In Leadbelly's version this note gives a tremendous power to the song, really emphasising the strength of what he's saying. Donegan, by contrast, uses the simplicity of the song to display his yodelling sort of high notes, which while pleasant in a way have a certain association with vacuity that takes away much of the power of the song. He also takes away the irregularity in the basic metre to replace it with his own decorations. However, one has to admit that for his purposes his treatment of the song is more suitable. For how is an English lad meant to convey the power and depth of a Black American work-song? Although Donegan obviously has respect for Leadbelly's original version, in the end he seems to be singing the song just because it's a nice simple song. He even leaves out Leadbelly's few contextualising words at the beginning of the song.

Donegan's version certainly has some good points, especially if it is compared to other English pop music of the time, and his vocal decorations are enjoyable, but it lacks the feeling of truth that Leadbelly's has. For a singer, the problem of copying Black music is particularly obvious since they not only

have to adopt a foreign accent, but also, in many cases, sing words that are totally inappropriate to their own social environment. A song that is starkly realistic when sung by a Black American may amount to little more than romantic fantasising when sung by an English person. Leadbelly, after all, was singing directly about his own experience. The song was a traditional one, but Leadbelly was able to make it into a personal statement about how he felt as part of a prison work-gang. With Donegan it's a case of how, (perhaps) he might (or might not) have felt if his life had been totally different.

Since the language in Take This Hammer is verbal, the cultural contradictions are obvious, but similar contradictions apply to musical language too and it is just as inappropriate for English musicians to adopt the jazz language 'in toto'.

American tenor player Archie Shepp has stated this particularly provocatively:

> I think many Europeans feel today that they have created a form of so-called jazz music which is equivalent to African-American jazz music. That's another danger in using the term "jazz", because if we call it "African-American music" it localizes it, it fixes it, it's ours. So now they ask me when I go to Europe what I think of "Polish jazz" which is like asking me what I think of Polish slavery. Because that music they call "jazz", grew out of slavery. It grew out of our suffering, it tells our story, but nobody wants to look at it like that because that's too political.
>
> Coda no. 171 (1980) p.11.

It will be necessary to look a little closer at the concept of musical meaning before we can take this any further, but first I will describe how the Musicians' Co-operative formed in London.

CHAPTER 6: LONDON

i) The Musicians' Co-operative

London has always been Britain's jazz metropolis. It has been the only place both with a large enough community of full-time musicians for mutual stimulation and with sufficient employment opportunities in jazz and related commercial music to sustain musicians. The jazz scene, both for modern and traditional jazz revolved around pubs and clubs, places that were informal in atmosphere and devoted to talking, drinking and dancing as well as listening to jazz. Some of the better known London clubs in the 50s were the Marquee, the 100 Club, The Flamingo and Ronnie Scott's club, the last one being an exception in that it regularly featured American as well as British musicians.

In the 60s when the London avant-garde was beginning to develop similar problems began to arise to those we saw in Chicago. There simply weren't enough places that were willing to give the musicians sufficient artistic licence to experiment and take the music in whatever direction they wanted. The music was forced into situations where it was not required to sell beer as well as itself.

In the late 60s the scene revolved around two places in central London. The Little Theatre Club in St. Martin's Lane and Ronnie Scott's Old Place in Dean St. The Little Theatre Club was the setting for continual experimenting from 1966 onwards. It was run by John Stevens and revolved around the people who played with the Spontaneous Music Ensemble presenting music 6 nights a week at first and later for 3 or 4 nights. When Ronnie Scott obtained new premises for his club later in the same year, he kept the old club open for young musicians to play in and until it closed this became the centre of attention for the new music although Stevens kept the Little Theatre going.

When the Old Place closed the gap left on the scene prompted

some fans to get together and form a society for presenting jazz which would be constituted in such a way that it would be eligible to receive funds from the Arts Council. Musicians wages at the Old Place had apparently been £3 a night and Ronnie Scott claimed it was still making a loss, so it was obvious that for any long term scene to be established subsidy would be required. And so the Jazz Centre Society (JCS) was formed with the aim of eventually acquiring its own premises which would be the London jazz centre. In the meantime they put on music at various different venues from pubs to concert halls and the Arts Council obliged by providing financial support (meagre at first but gradually increasing).

The stated intention of the JCS was to continue the scene at the Old Place but there was a group of musicians who felt they were being neglected by the JCS because they didn't conform to the personal tastes of the organisers, and partly as a protest they formed their own organisation for putting on concerts - the Musicians' Co-operative. The seven members of this were Evan Parker, Derek Bailey, Paul Rutherford, Howard Riley, Barry Guy, Tony Oxley, Paul Lytton. John Stevens and Trevor Watts were involved at first but not for long, and various other musicians joined towards the end of its life, but basically the Musicians Co-op was these seven musicians.

The idea of a Co-operative was first seriously mooted when the musicians were working together in Germany. At the time (now too) the scene in Germany was much better for improvising musicians and also in Berlin there had been a musicians' co-operative since 1968 (called Free Music Production), so it was an obvious stimulus to action.

> Howard Riley: The first thing I can specifically remember was back in January of '70, it was a gig in Germany, a week at a radio station in Hamburg. There were several people on this gig including myself, Derek Bailey, Evan Parker, Tony Oxley, Barry Guy, Paul Rutherford and some Europeans - Manfred Schoof, Kenny Wheeler, Michael Portal.

> At that time then, there was the usual talk, banter, just about dissatisfaction with the gig situation in London. Of course when you're in Germany it's always easier to get into that area because you're a few thousand miles away. But nothing actually got done, it was just general talk. Then in the summer of 70 a few of us decided it might be a good idea to actually do something and try and get some kind of a co-operative going.... It got to the point when in September we actually got the thing going.

The seven musicians in the co-op were all highly committed to their own music and were unwilling to make musical compromises by changing their styles. In England the audience for their music was very small and this again meant that some sort of subsidy for the music was essential for it to survive in the long term. Some of the members had short term ways of surviving, for instance Evan Parker was partly supported by his wife who was a teacher, and Paul Lytton had a job as a dental technician.

This was not a new situation. There were always very few musicians in England who actually make a living from playing uncommercialised jazz or improvisation and there have really been only two alternatives facing the full-time musician. The first, which is taken by most of the more conventional musicians, is to rely on various forms of commercial music such as recording sessions for television advertisements for a living, and maybe do a little teaching, and then to fit their own music in where they can. Which would normally tend to be lowpaid gigs in pubs and occasional trips outside London as a soloist with a local rhythm section. This approach is unacceptable to someone who is really committed to developing his music. Firstly because it simply takes up too much time and is basically unrelated to his real work, (in fact it's like any other day job), and secondly, because commercial music can actually work against creative music by associating particular musical meanings with selling things. Once a music has become popular and has thus succeeded in selling itself to the public it can also be used to sell

other commodities. To take just one small example, even a non-smoker like myself is likely to think of cigars when a particular air by Bach is played.

Thus it may be contradictory for musicians who are dedicated to their own work to be involved with commercial music as well. In this case they are left with the second alternative which is to live frugally and to get as much work as possible playing one's own music. This was the stance taken by the members of the MC. Again it wasn't new, but the fact that it was asserted collectively as a point of principle, rather than personal preference, represented a new attitude on the part of the musicians. This stance helped to communicate a seriousness of intent very clearly even to those not directly involved in the music.

The MC was thus a pressure group for a particular group of professional musicians. It was concerned almost exclusively with putting on concerts, principally by its members, and exerting pressure on the Arts Council and Greater London Arts Association to fund these concerts. Because of their professional aims, it was logical that the subsidising bodies should become crucial to their cause. Evan Parker about the Arts Council:

> I think they can only respond to pressure from outside, and until the community reaches a certain point in its development it doesn't actually generate enough pressure to make them alter their ways of doing things, but once the community does reach a certain level of intensity of activity there automatically comes like an adjustment in their attitude, because in the end that's what they're there for. But the weakness of our scene that they play on very much is the fact that it is something, or seems to be, or can seem to be more interesting for the player than for the audience, and that's why it's very important to build an audience....

And about the JCS:

> In a way they represent the response of the Arts Council to pressure from an English jazz fans' lobby. And there's no equivalent pressure from an English jazz musicians' lobby, so the English jazz community gets dealt from the Jazz Centre what the English jazz fans' community feels it's worth. And there's not always a complete correspondence of the two groups' views of the worth.

As Parker sees it Dutch musicians have produced a stronger lobby and have developed the situation further.

> What's interesting about the Dutch scene, the BIM, the musicians are in control. They've turned it more into a situation which would be parallel to a self-managed orchestra, like one of the four London orchestras, where the government is dealing directly with the musicians involved. It's not impossible to achieve here, but it's just that bit more difficult.

The commitment that these 7 musicians shared was the desire to take an activity that looked as though it could only be a hobby or part-time pursuit and build it up into a full-time profession. This is in contrast to some of the younger improvisors who have emerged through the seventies who actually emphasise the 'hobby' or self-enjoyment aspect of their activity and refuse to make audience building a priority. For many of these it is more important to enjoy playing music for yourself than to present it to a large audience. We will come across this attitude in the Bristol section. Thus, improvisation now includes many different attitudes towards music making, but the Musicians' Co-op concentrated on a fairly narrow range of these.

In the late 60s, of the musicians who had developed from the jazz tradition these seven were probably the most radical and uncompromising in their playing and although there were important differences between them this was really the common basis from which they worked. Musicians exploring different approaches to improvisation were not included in the MC.

The technique common to all of the MC members was that of totally free improvisation, based on virtuoso techniques. This was not a totally new concept but it was a new idea for musicians to base their whole style on it. Although the music of Ornette Coleman and Cecil Taylor in the early 60s was sometimes called free improvisation they still normally used composed themes or preset structures or both, as described in Chapter 3. Much of the music of the Musicians' Co-op totally dispensed with both these and created the music entirely spontaneously. Hence the name of John Stevens' group, the Spontaneous Music Ensemble. This was really a radical break in the structure of the music because it meant that a performance could go in any direction at any time, and it put great weight on the improvisors' reflexes and ability to control the flow of the music.

For some of the musicians in the Co-op the actual fact that the music was improvised was of prime importance whereas for others more important was the development of a new personal vocabulary of sounds on their instruments, and they were willing to work within any setting that allowed them to develop this. All the musicians discarded the regular metrical patterns of the jazz tradition and also the functional aspect of tonal harmony. However the spectrum of emotional structures in their approaches to improvising was wide as will be clear when I discuss particular recorded music later on in this chapter.

The first public appearance of the Co-op was a press conference at Ronnie Scott's club in September 1970. The Melody Maker for the following week reported:

> THE JAZZ REVOLT
>
> Several of Britain's most notable young jazz musicians held a press conference at Ronnie Scott's Club, London on Monday to announce the formation of a "musicians co-operative" because, they say, the Jazz Centre Society isn't giving them enough work.

The article concentrated on the attack on the JCS which, according to others present, was not the main emphasis of the meeting. It provoked a strong reaction from JCS secretary Dave Green in the following issue where he argued that the real problem was lack of funds for jazz as a whole, and that Musicians Co-op members had received as much work from the JCS as most other musicians.

The November issue of Jazz Monthly took the trouble to report the meeting a little more accurately:

> ... it was decided that the Musicians Co-operative would, whenever possible, explore work possibilities for its members and engage in mutual aid in this field. The musicians present clearly felt quite deeply that there would be a reasonable audience for their music if they had the opportunities to present it as they wished, and certainly collectors who imagine that avant-garde stylists are disinterested or unaware of the need for communication with an audience are totally in error. Initially the Musicians Co-operative will present a monthly concert on a Sunday evening at the Ronnie Scott Club... Beyond this the members feel, quite rightly I think, that future developments will follow naturally if the organisation succeeds in its basic objectives.

Albert McCarthy in Jazz Monthly, Nov. 1970.

The MC thus got off to a well-publicised start, and on October 10th the Melody Maker reported that the first concert at Ronnie Scott's was "fairly well attended". These monthly concerts went on for about two years presenting groups from outside the Co-op as well as members. The club wasn't normally open on a Sunday and both sides seemed happy with the arrangement, which was that the Musicians Co-op took the door takings and Scott took the bar takings. Both Oxley and Stevens had previously worked as house drummer at the club, so they were familiar with the set-up.

Later on, as the concerts became more frequent, the MC moved to the Unity Theatre in Camden where they held concerts until the organisation disintegrated in 1974. There were a number of reasons for this. Practical ones first, the Unity Theatre burnt down, and also it was becoming more difficult to get money from the Greater London Arts Association as they became worried about the small size of audiences. But there were more fundamental reasons too. There were musical arguments within the Co-op, specifically about the use of composition in the context of improvisation. Also there was pressure from the growing group of younger improvisors to be allowed to take part in the Co-op, and this caused arguments between members. Some new members were allowed to join, for example John Russel, Steve Beresford and Phil Wachsmann, but there were others such as Dave Panton who were definitely refused membership.

The strongest reason for it disintegrating was that to a large extent, in the terms of the original members, it seemed to have done its job. I pointed out earlier that it was basically a pressure group for professional musicians and by 1974 most of the members had built up a wide range of contacts throughout Europe and were beginning to work more (although this didn't really apply inside England). This also made it more difficult in practical terms to run the Co-op since members were away for a lot of the time. It is now clear that the long-term propaganda effect of the MC, as well as the record company, Incus Records (which was started soon after the Co-op by Bailey, Parker and Oxley), was very considerable. The original members and a few others who weren't members came to be known as the 'first generation free improvisors' within the improvising community which indicated a certain respect for their achievement.

As far as the original members were concerned they could continue some of the functions just as adequately now as individuals (in a similar way to New York). For example, they could apply for grants from the Arts Council with relatively little difficulty whereas before the MC this would have been impossible. Derek

Bailey has continued to present series of concerts that present both his own music and many younger musicians and Evan Parker, Barry Guy and Howard Riley have worked on Arts Council committees to further the music.

However, for the wider community of improvisors the problems weren't solved. There was still a strong need for a musicians organisation and in 1976 the London Musicians' Collective was formed. This was very different. Its membership was open to anyone and it soon had over 100 members including many part-time as well as full-time musicians. Although the needs of the musicians are much more diverse than those of the MC, it has already achieved some important things that the Co-op was unable to. Notably, the establishment of a permanent building for improvised music in Camden Town, together with a system of paid administration to keep the organisation going. Some of its members too have run the periodical magazine Musics which has been crucial in spreading communication about the music.

I'm not intending to cover the work of the London Musicians' Collective in detail here, partly for reasons of space, but also because it doesn't relate so closely to my theme, inasmuch as a lot of the music has only a very tenuous connection with the jazz tradition. However, I will refer to it occasionally.

Some of the problems confronted by the MC have still not been solved, which is illustrated by the formation of a new organisation in 1981 called A.I.M. (Association of Improvising Musicians). This is an organisation which includes some of the old MC members (Barry Guy, Paul Rutherford, Evan Parker) but also more traditional jazz musicians such as Elton Dean and John Taylor and some free improvisors who weren't in the MC such as Eddie Prevost, Keith Rowe, John Stevens and Trevor Watts. Its main aim seems to be to exert pressure on the Jazz Centre Society and the Arts Council to give jazz and improvising musicians a better deal.

Thus, although the Musicians' Co-operative no longer exists, its story continues. But rather than going into this in detail, the rest of this chapter is concerned with looking closely at the issues that were of internal importance to the MC and partly led to its disintegration, and at the characteristics which distinguish both the music and the organisation from their American counterparts. These being different aspects of the social meaning of the music.

In section ii I look at the composition/improvisation debate with special attention to the way this reflects ideas about individual and collective statements. First, I look at the position that rejects composition completely as exemplified by Evan Parker and Derek Bailey. I compare their different ideas of the group and suggest the effect this has on the way the audience must listen to the music. Then by describing two pieces of music which combine composition and improvisation I show how this music tends to take on the personality of one person. I contrast this with a duo improvisation which is a genuine dialogue. Having pointed out the essentially European context to this debate I then go on to section iii.

Under the heading, Improvisation, Jazz and Cultural History, in this section I consider the musicians' desires to get away from the specificity of the jazz idiom in relation to the way the music has been understood by European audiences historically and the consequent difficulty in legitimating the music to its potential audience. In the light of this I consider a model suggested by Evan Parker, based on an analogy with scientific research, which frees the music from cultural ties, and treats it as a pure art form.

In part iv, Social Meanings, Politics and Ways of Listening, I consider all the ways in which the social meanings of free improvisation may be called political. These include consideration of the overall cultural context (a comparison to other sorts of music), the social context (whether it is open and accessible),

the productive context (aims and motives of the musicians) and importantly the musical content. With respect to the last I analyse the relationships, musical and social, which are expressed by some recorded improvisations.

As a way of linking to the Bristol chapter I point out how the aims and motivations of the musicians to a certain extent contradict some of the musical meanings I refer to.

ii) The Composition/Improvisation Debate

Although all the members of the MC were committed to the idea of free improvisation there existed a diversity of opinion about whether composition could in any way enhance the quality of the improvisation or whether it inevitably acted as a limitation on the musicians. The argument is still active today. In the meantime various people have suggested that it amounts to no more than theological quibbling; and it is certainly true that it does rely on fairly nice distinctions between approaches that have a lot in common. However, the different opinions have definitely led to different ways of working and, since I argued strongly in Chapter two that meaning in music is closely related to the way it is produced, this practical debate is a useful base for looking at that proposition more closely. Also the emphasis on this debate helps to point out some of the differences from the American situation which will be explored later on in this chapter.

I mentioned in Chapter one some of the ways in which improvisation is controlled, directly or indirectly, by the participants and made the point that, in the context of musicians identifying with the sounds they make, control of the music means control of the musicians. Thus, if hierarchical structures are to be avoided, it is essential that there should be a mutual understanding between the players about what is being done. As a starting point they should all want to play with each other. We have already seen that this was broadly the case in the AACM, but not in the JCG (where this was never the aim). The members of the MC did have this shared aim at first, as Howard Riley explained to me:

> ... every member of the co-op had big differences musically and a very different approach to playing. But I think if there was one thing that everybody in the co-op had in common it was an approach to playing that was concerned with craftsmanship as quite an important element in their instrumental playing.

> ... on each different instrument they took it as read that there would be a certain basic instrumental skill, if you like, involved in playing. Also at that time I think it's true to say that everyone was involved with music as music. In other words there wasn't really the element of music theatre for example; nobody was interested in that. I mean I'm still not - as far as I'm concerned I just go and play and that's what I'm interested in. Take it or leave it as music, and judge it by those values.
>
> ... so we did have a common basis to work from and I think basically everyone in the Co-op had a lot of respect for the other people's abilities instrumentally.

The shared musical ground amounted to the use of individual instrumental dexterity as a controlling force on the music. But of the seven members, Oxley, Guy, Riley and Rutherford were also interested in using a form of composition whereas Parker, Bailey and Lytton were not, and this eventually led to conflict. Bailey explained to Ron Atkins why he sees composition as irrelevant:

> I have rarely seen it work. Duke Ellington stands for me as the complete exception, the only man who made sense of the idea. I've never found that composition was capable of carrying improvisation to new levels. It is wrong to regard improvisation as instantaneous composition, since the two activities have nothing in common. Composition always seems to be presenting some philosophical, religious or political idea, while improvisation is about the nuts and bolts. It's about playing.
>
> The Guardian, 7/5/76.

Parker too has spoken about this, and while the Co-op was still in existence it almost seemed to over-ride the basic unity which Riley referred to.

Evan Parker (in 1972):

> When we started the Co-op, it was much more of a socio-political expression than a musical one. There was no musical coherence within the Co-op. There wasn't an aesthetic grouping as such, except that we all tended to come from the freer end of the spectrum. But amongst ourselves we have violent disagreements about music. It's very hard for Tony Oxley to convince me that his compositions are necessary, and even harder for him to convince Derek. And Derek plays solo now... that's an expression of something. And Barry Guy has a big band which he writes for and he gets almost ridiculed for that by other members of the Co-op. Well, he's subjected to heavy humour for the mere act of making an arrangement, for imposing those parts on other people.

quoted in I. Carr, Music Outside, pp.85-6.

Parker carried this attack further in 1973 in his "Address to the SPNM [1] Forum on 'Music in the Future'" where he suggested that composing or score making would be better considered as "an esoteric branch of the literary arts rather than as anything to do with music". He argued that if a score represents some kind of idealised performance there must surely be more pleasure in reading a score than listening to an interpretation which can never completely live up to the ideal. He pointed out that if anyone was dispensable in the music making process it was the composer and that the only future for composers was to become more involved in the actual physical production of sound, (quoted in Musics no. 1).

By 1979 Parker was confident enough to argue for improvisation's absolute superiority over composition:

> For me even a bad improvisation is more interesting than a good composition.
>
> You can still get very good pieces. This came to me very forcefully when I was at

1. Society for the Promotion of New Music.

> Henry Kaiser's place and he played me 'Trans' the Stockhausen piece. It was the first time I'd heard the record and I thought 'OK, yeah, I don't see how one man could organise a piece better - it was a beautifully written piece, but it doesn't have that richness that I want from music, that I've got used to hearing which is to do with the interaction of minds. Not to do with one man's supremely calculated invention. It has to do with a give and take within the music. Even a duo of two improvisors playing wooden flutes would to me finally make a much more complex piece of music than Stockhausen's 'Trans'. A much more listenable music - not listenable because it's complex, but richer - put it that way - richer, fuller.

Even a solo improvisation, where this 'interaction' obviously can't be present, is for Parker potentially a richer music.

> There's still a kind of responsiveness to the particular nature of the performance situation. There's a specificity, there's a focus of the music to the place, which a composition can't have - Unless it's done that way - There are composers and composers and some are more sensitive than others to the uniqueness of the performing occasion.

The Parker/Bailey position is in a sense a theoretical extreme and while both of them have been rigorous in applying their beliefs to groups they have organised themselves they have also been willing to play in other groups where they have had to make compromises. Both played in Tony Oxley's group and in Barry Guy's big band which used compositional structures. Also in Kenny Wheeler's band which plays a much more conventional form of jazz. Parker too played in the Brotherhood of Breath, whose music was based on South African derived tunes. However, in all these groups, although the context was compromising to their position, they were still able to function independently as instrumentalists in the way that more conventional jazz improvisors do.

In fact it is misleading to bracket Parker and Bailey together because their ideas about what improvised music should be are actually quite different.

The difference between them centres around their notion of the group. Parker's approach has been to play in a specific group over a long period and work at creating a distinctive group sound. So he has worked with the Spontaneous Music Ensemble, the Evan Parker/Paul Lytton duo, the Music Improvisation Company and the Alexander von Schlippenbach quartet all for periods of several years. He considers his most important work to be in these groups.

Groups have also been important in Bailey's career especially early on. When he was working in Sheffield in the early sixties it was in the context of the group 'Joseph Holbrooke' that he developed the basis of his personal approach to guitar playing (according to his own account in Improvisation). This group not only provided social support for the three members (helped them feel not completely mad) but also represented a music in itself, rather than being a simple adding together of individuals. However, at the same time, the musicians developed a way of relating to each other within the group that would form the basis of Bailey's later attitude to groups. Solos in the group were frequently unaccompanied and this helped the musicians to gain a strong sense of their individual identities not directly related to the rest of the group. The independence eventually carried through into the group's playing too and much of Bailey's subsequent playing has been concerned with the question to what extent must one's personal ideas be compromised in a group situation. Bailey has developed a deep suspicion of the permanent improvising group.

> An important characteristic of most groupings in free improvisation is the brevity of their existence. It is perhaps obvious that most casual collaborations - the most common type of grouping in free improvisation - should

> quickly exhaust their areas of mutual interest and then consider their common ambitions to be satisfied. But even the musically successful groups seem to lose some of their fertility after around two to three years. At this point there occurs a hardening of the group's improvisational arteries; the music becomes too obviously a dialogue or there is a continuous harping on the identity of the group which is hard to distinguish from self-parody. Sometimes a self-conscious clarity takes over - a straining after simplicity which narrows the music down to what might or might not be its essentials. Mainly, though, the played-out improvising group suffers a loss of what Leo Smith describes as the 'independent centre' of the improvisation; that part of the music which exists independently of the performers' intentions and seems to be created by a sort of second-degree or sub-conscious relationship between the players. The indefinables get defined or disappear.
>
> D. Bailey, Improvisation, p.145.

Around 1970/71, Bailey turned his attentions almost exclusively to solo playing. His initial motives seem to have been not so much based on his disillusionment with groups as on a kind of self-examination or practical self-criticism.

> The need, after a considerable time thinking only in group terms, was to make a close examination of my own playing and to find out what was wrong with it and what was not wrong with it.
>
> ibid. p.126.

But after concentrating on solo playing for several years he found himself in a much stronger position for instigating the type of group relationship that he felt was appropriate.

> Strangely, I have found that the best base from which to approach group playing is that of being a solo improvisor. Having no group loyalties to offend and having his solo playing as an ultimate resource, he can play with other musicians, of whatever persuasion,

> as often as he wishes without having to enter into a permanent commitment to any stylistic or aesthetic position. This might be, I think, the ideal situation for an improvisor.
>
> ibid. p.132.

Bailey has been the most lucid spokesman for an attitude that is common amongst improvisors, especially in generations subsequent to his own. His priority above all is to make sure that his music never becomes a fixed thing. The qualities that are most highly valued are spontaneity and a constant flow of fresh ideas. He has argued that this is the basic difference between free improvisation, and the various idiomatic forms of improvisation such as jazz, Indian music and organ music. For the free improvisor, he argues, there is by definition no concept of authenticity except to the player himself and this produces a re-ordering of priorities.

> The free improvisation position infers (sic) that whatever the commitment to the music played or to his own personal style, there is a higher commitment, which is to follow the implications of free improvisation. The position of the idiomatic improvisor is here reversed. For him, everything, including his freedom, must serve his idiom. For the free improvisor everything, including his music, must serve his freedom.
>
> ibid. p.151.

This means too that a different critical framework must be developed to talk about the music.

> Music assessed in composition terms - this piece fitting with that piece, the developments, the over-all construction, the homogeneity, etcetera - the whole clockwork masterpiece idea of music, is more or less an irrelevance in free improvisation. In fact whether the finished piece can on examination be considered a good piece of music in any terms is not the prime aim of free improvisation. It is, of course,

> a consideration, but more important as an objective is the promotion of the improvisation, the raising of the improvisation to a level where all the players are involved equally and inextricably in the music-making act. And the achievement of this experience is always seen as a liberation.
>
> ibid. p.150.

Bailey is describing here not a way of producing something to be enjoyed by an audience but a way of inducing a feeling of liberation amongst the performers, which hopefully will be perceived by the audience. He has now organised his playing in a way that preserves his reservations about permanent groups and yet allows him to play with musicians he likes on an occasional basis. He calls the organisation Company. When it started in 1976 it consisted of a pool of eleven improvisors of very diverse styles and backgrounds (incidentally including two members of the AACM, Leo Smith and Anthony Braxton). Each concert would draw different combinations of players from this pool. However, now it seems that Bailey uses the umbrella title to cover any musician he wants to play with. This has created the situation where the musicians don't feel they have to repress their individual styles to support the group identity but nevertheless there is still the possibility of there being a strong group identity over and above the sum of the individual players.

Bailey's position is essentially action orientated and hence musician rather than audience orientated. From the point of view of the audience, this makes the music exceptionally radical. There is no attempt to project the music to the audience, rather the audience must project themselves into the music and imagine what it is like to be one of the musicians. It is necessary to understand the process as well as the product of free improvisation to enjoy it fully, otherwise it is likely to seem like a random collection of sounds, some interesting and some uninteresting. This is not an easy thing

to do. I have already pointed out that the music of the Art Ensemble of Chicago required a similar projection from audiences, but in that case there were explicit structures and devices in the music that helped them to do this. Most of the Musicians' Co-operative improvisation doesn't have this except very occasionally where irony and humour are used to emphasise the nature of the music. This has led to two characteristics of Musicians' Co-op concerts. Firstly, the audience tends to contain a high proportion of people who themselves play improvised music in some form, whether part-time or full-time. Secondly, the music tends to work much better when played in small halls without any public address systems. In a large audience it is very easy to feel alienated from the proceedings on stage.

While Bailey's position is based on constant developments and change, Evan Parker is more willing to accept elements of stability in a group relationship as a basis on which to build spontaneity and change. He explained the nature of his duo with Paul Lytton to Derek Bailey:

DB: I put it to Evan Parker that the changes that come over long-lasting groups - and this is particularly true of musicians working solo over a long period - usually resulted in the improvisation more and more resembling idiomatic improvisation. Certain elements gradually become fixed: identities, relationships, vocabulary often, and the improvisation of other elements is carried out in relation to these fixed points. He thought this development useful:-

EP: Things that are established as known between yourselves probably form as useful a context for the evolution of something new as anything. But the inter-personal relationships should only form the basis for working, they shouldn't actually define the music too clearly, which they very often do.

ibid. p.146.

Elsewhere Parker has shown a different attitude to the question of idioms:

> Derek, I think, hopes and trusts fervently that free improvisation is not an idiom in itself. I'm not sure about that, and I'm not sure that if it is it is as big a restriction as it sounds.
>
> You get involved in semantic niceties in a way, fine points of "What do you mean when you say 'improvisation'?" and so on. I think it's possible for it to have an identity in itself and yet, at the same time, have a built-in capacity for change. It seems to me that if free music is an idiom then that's the kind of idiom it is.

quoted in Impetus 5, p.257.

Parker is more willing to accept a description of himself as a jazz musician than Bailey, and his explanations of the music have recently centred around the notion of coherence which is closely related to Bailey's idea of personal authenticity.

David Toop: How much is your technique to do with self-surprise in relation to acoustics and so forth?

Evan Parker: As an ideal to bear in mind it is quite high on the list, but to what extent it's realised in a given performance, I don't know, because it has to be balanced against some other criteria like coherence.

DT: Coherence?

EP: Well, developmental coherence. For my purposes I have to feel that I'm going on in a certain line. It would be possible to do something new that was made easier in that it had no relationship except juxtaposition to the work I've already done. This was the big change that came over me after the first couple of years working with Paul (Lytton) that, in a set, by doing A you could produce sound B, the numbers of new sounds produced didn't mean anything in terms of the feel of the music.

from a conversation on 'Technique and Improvisation', Musics 19.

Neither Bailey nor Parker were seeking 'newness' as a thing in itself, for both of them it was more a question of development within a context that seemed authentic or coherent in their personal terms. As I have said their main difference is over the role of the group in this process and when compared to their commitment to free improvisation their differences are small. They have continued to work together regularly, both as a duo and as part of larger groups. However, it is now rare to find the improvisors in the MC playing with those who also compose.

Because the composer/improvisors are arguing for a pluralism their arguments have tended to be less specific and to some extent have been based on a liberal stance of mutual tolerance. Howard Riley for instance put it like this:

> I can see the point in almost all the music I hear. That's partly because I was a music student and I trained myself to listen to absolutely everything and try to get at what the person or the group that was doing it was up to. It wasn't passive listening, I used to harden myself, I'd say "This sounds dreadful, but just let's try and see what the people doing it are trying to do". And it wasn't dreadful, it was just my own prejudices.
>
> I think I can usually distinguish a thing that is structured from one that's non-structured, but to me the important point is whether it works musically. There might be a point politically, because then you get into the business of royalties and all the paraphernalia of the music business. So there is a point politically if somebody's ripping off somebody else.

Riley himself composes some music with no improvisation in it and also some which includes improvisation and sees no contradiction between the different ways of making music. It is for him basically a matter of personal preferences. As a player, though, he is interested only in improvised music.

> I never studied piano formally. I was never interested in interpreting and developing Beethoven sonatas. There are some people who actually get a lot out of interpreting written music as performers. For me that would be out of order, I'm not interested in playing detailed written pieces.

WM: Even if they do work at this interpretation, still the basic communication that comes across is from the composer isn't it?

HR: Of course, yes. I don't mind that as long as the performers are happy with the situation they're in. I think if there's an element of hypocrisy, if the performer's doing it under duress, I think that's wrong.

It would seem that all the seven members of the Co-op agree that composition is an activity of a different kind from improvisation although some may enjoy both activities. (Barry Guy is the only member who regularly performs composed music as well as composing it). The crux of the argument lies with the hybrid forms which include improvisation and composition. Howard Riley, like Leo Smith (see the Chicago section), actually questioned the use of the term composition for this sort of music.

> When we talk about composition in improvised music we're really talking about structure, we're not really talking about note for note composition. I mean I wouldn't even call it composition, I would just call it graphic frameworks or whatever it is that provide an overall structure...
>
> The exception might be the (London) Jazz Composers' Orchestra where you've got written structures which are quite detailed, but at the same time you've got improvisation. Sometimes that works and sometimes it doesn't. I accept that there's a failure rate there because it is something that's quite difficult to do so to expect it to work in a slick way would be defeating the whole purpose of the thing anyway.

The London Jazz Composers' Orchestra (LJCO) has varied in size from 18 to 27 people and Riley suggested that composition was essential for it because of its size.

> The pieces I've heard by large groups (ten upwards) trying to improvise totally freely I've always found just a boring mess as a listener. And I don't get much out of playing it either because I'm not getting the detail that I get out of small groups, but on the other hand I'm not getting the structure I get if there was some structure imposed on it.

The musicians who have composed for the LCJO have taken widely different approaches to structuring the music as Barry Guy, the band's leader explains:

> Improvised music with a certain degree of control is used to create orchestral textures against which soloists play. The whole point of this project is to experiment with composed and improvised music with improvising musicians forming the backbone of the orchestra. Every 'composer' has a different approach - Tony Oxley with graphic layouts and verbal indications, Howard Riley with taut statements and extended improvisatory areas, Paul Rutherford with (mainly) lyrical written lines and myself with rather complex juxtapositions of the two extremes (sometimes over-complex). The important point to be made is that the musicians who compose the scores, also improvise along with everybody else, so there's no elitist attitude in attendance.

The only music recorded by the LCJO is Barry Guy's piece Ode which takes up two whole LPs. The difficulty for me with this piece is knowing how to listen to it. I mentioned above that in listening to free improvisation one must be aware of the process as well as the product and with Ode this is difficult. One is not quite sure of the relative status of the written and improvised aspects. Also the band consists partly of more traditionally oriented jazz musicians who introduce a third

element into the piece. It is thus a blend of free improvisation, jazz and composition. This means that there are at least three concepts of musical meaning operating simultaneously. Firstly, the ideas of spontaneity and change as I described in the section about Parker and Bailey. Secondly, the ideas about coherent and logical forms, or the attempt to make a "complete" piece of music. Thirdly, the jazz idea about intensity of sound and rhythmic drive which I described earlier.

The conflict is largely expressed through the role of the conductor Buxton Orr who represented strongly the second idea (possibly more than the composition itself). Mark Charig who is a cornet player from a jazz background in the orchestra once described to me how whenever the music is beginning to "happen" in his terms, the conductor starts getting worried that the music is straying too far from the score and waves at the players to calm down and subdue their playing. At a concert, this theatrical element was an important part of the musical experience, but of course it can only be indirectly inferred from a record.

Again it seems to be a form which can be best appreciated from a knowledge of the various positions involved and would be difficult to make sense of for a 'naive' listener. In this particular piece it seems that these conflicts are not worked out in the way they might be in a free improvisation group and the tendency is for them to simply stand in juxtaposition. Also in a structure of this nature the question of personal authenticity which is of such importance to free improvisors is made more difficult. For many improvisors their style is not just expressed through the details of their playing, the particular sounds they use, but also through the way they handle the music over a whole evening and the way they handle their relationships with the other musicians in the group.

In <u>Ode</u> these possibilities are largely removed. It is written in 7 parts (only 6 are on the record) and each part has a strict structure of written parts and groupings of improvisors, so the

context of the improvising is definitely fixed (with a varying amount of precision) and thus the improvisors have fairly limited possibilities. One approach to understanding this piece would be as a composition which uses some of the sounds of jazz and free improvisation but not the form. In other words there are certain sounds the composer wants to hear, but he has found they are best attained through improvisation rather than notation. Another way is to see it as an attempt to simplify the inevitable complexity which would be caused by 20 people improvising together. Or it could be a way of pinpointing particular areas of improvisation which are considered interesting and making sure that these are arrived at with the minimum trouble or time.

When a more recent version of the band played a concert and workshop in Bristol in March 1980, some of the free improvisors in the band such as Evan Parker and the German bass player Peter Kowald suggested both the last two justifications for the approach taken by the band. It was seen in terms of expediency in front of an audience. The same music might be arrived at by free improvisation, they said, but it might take three hours to find it by which time the audience would be bored. The implication was that in the case of 18 musicians improvising together the process of interaction and mutual adjustment by the musicians would simply be too complex and drawn out for it to be enjoyed by the audience.

As it happened, the audience didn't get a chance to find out, because all the pieces played by the band were very strictly structured allowing improvisation only in specific places or for specific compositional ends. Some of the conflicts had been ironed out. Instead of there being a conductor, Barry Guy gave directions from his double bass. There were still some more idiomatic jazz players in it ('jazz' is in its name after all) but they seemed to be used more as an element of contrast rather than being worked into the basic structure. For example in one piece Kenny Wheeler played a lyrical jazz flugelhorn solo over a gradually varying ostinato background.

Overall the concert exhibited a more skillful and refined treatment of the same sorts of forms as Guy used in Ode. Much of it was very enjoyable, both written bits and improvised bits and in fact, as Guy claimed, there was a wide variation in the relationship between composition and improvisation in the different pieces. For example one piece linked short solo improvisations by different members of the band with short written sections in a sort of call and response pattern; another piece had musicians improvising in pairs on opposite sides of the band and cueing each other in, at other times some musicians improvised while others played parts that were fully written out; another piece was scored graphically indicating only general textures of rhythm, pitch and loudness.

However, the main point I want to make is that the principal meaning that was transmitted was that of the composer and that there was no way that free improvisation could occur in the full sense meant by Derek Bailey when he said that all the players should be "involved equally and inextricably in the music-making act". The music is thus a different genre both from free improvisation and from composition.

As an aside I would just like to note that there have been large improvising groups that have worked at playing without any formal structures for a period of years, notably the Alternative Music Orchestra in London, and it is by no means accepted by all that large means composing.

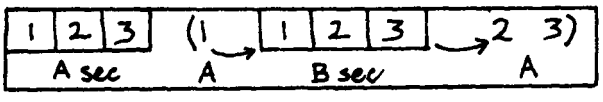
The next example I want to discuss is by a small group, the Tony Oxley sextet and I will analyse in more detail exactly how Oxley uses the other improvisors in the group to create his personal musical message.

I have already mentioned Evan Parker's criticisms of Oxley's composing and since these were made at a time when Parker was

still playing in Tony Oxley's groups it must have led at least partly to the dissociation of these two musicians. Parker claimed that Oxley couldn't convince him of the point of his compositions; I don't know how Oxley tried to convince him, but I will discuss some possible interpretations with particular reference to one of the compositions that has been recorded.

It is Crossing from the record Ichnos, played by Tony Oxley, Parker, Bailey, Rutherford, Guy, Kenny Wheeler. The sleevenote (presumably by Oxley) describes the music thus:

> The A section of the previous recording has been substituted for 3 textures, these occur immediately after the percussion introduction. The A section is then repeated in part only, (to 1st texture). The B section is introduced immediately after which the A is again repeated but from texture 2.



> During the improvisation the tenor saxophone dominates the beginning giving way to the trumpet to complete the improvisation. The piece is finalised by repeat of the opening structure.

Listening to this piece there are certain features that become more dominant than in other improvisations by some of the same musicians and these must be attributed to the influence of the composition.

1. There is an extreme formal tightness and economy to the piece. There is no slack in it. It lasts about 8 minutes and there is no hint of indecision at any point. It follows a continuous line.
2. A sharp percussive attack is used by all the instruments. This is especially true of the scored sections and the beginning of the improvisation.

3. The structure is closely related to the typical bebop structure in that it proceeds: theme, tenor solo, trumpet solo, short drum solo, repeat of theme.

The scored section consists mainly of simple but unconventional sounds on each instrument placed in combination with each other, such as tremolo bowed bass with very staccatto tenor sax honks or trombone glissando with high guitar notes. There is a general tendency towards the two extremes of very short percussive notes and long held notes often using crescendi and decrescendi. Many of the long notes use flutter tonguing or tremolo bowing and thus relate very closely to the fast drumming that Oxley plays with them and also to his rough bowing of cymbals and metal strings. In fact the score operates very strikingly as an orchestration of Oxley's drumming techniques and far from being an innocuos structure, "not really composition at all " in the sense that Howard Riley suggested, it actually bends the music very much in Oxley's direction. The improvisation at first relates closely to the scored section but later moves away from it as new material is introduced particularly by Bailey.

It has sometimes been argued that in this sort of music there is nothing that can be composed that can't be done better through improvising. This may be true of the actual sounds produced, but the way these six people immediately jump into a particular sound area right from the start of the piece and stay in it would be impossible through purely free improvisation. It is presumably this conciseness that Oxley is after and listening to Crossing is an exhilirating experience because of this. It is not musicians exploring so much as musicians who have found something and are keen to show it, to get it all out in as clear a form as possible. And once they have displayed it they play the theme again at the end to say: "There! We've done it".

Structured improvisation with this degree of tightness in it must, I think, be considered in terms of composition. It is more than a structure to allow musical personalities to come

through, it is actually an expression of Tony Oxley music.

It is useful to contrast this with a record of free improvisation made the following year by Evan Parker and Paul Lytton, Collective Calls (Urban). This presents Parker in a setting stripped of the 'unnecessary' composition and the music is very different.

On this record each musical idea is examined thoroughly by both musicians before the music moves on. Often more than five minutes is spent in the same musical area and this allows a more flexible relationship between the two players. For example, the first piece Peradam is based on two pulses. A very fast one stated by the stick patterns on the percussion and by fast fingering and flutter tonguing on the tenor saxophone. On this the two musicians coincide, but on the slower rhythm made by using gradual crescendos the two work independently, sometimes coinciding and sometimes not. Parker bases most of his playing on a repeated turn on the saxophone and through the piece gradually brings out different harmonics in the sound, occasionally interjecting other melodic fragments, while Lytton varies his fast percussion from very low rolls on a drum, to clattering metallic noises on what sounds like a dustbin lid, to dry wood block and cymbal sounds. The piece is structurally very simple, yet the flexibility allows a complex music to emerge. Although very fast, the music is unhurried, there is no feeling of having to keep up with each other, yet at the same time some of the responses in the details are very quick. And when they've done this enough, they just stop.

The implications for the social meaning of the music of the two positions within the MC should be clear by now. In Chapter two I suggested that composed music embodies the world view of

the composer, but that free improvisation represents the juxtaposition and developing relationships of the world views of all those involved. This hybrid form of composed improvisation in contrast to both embodies primarily the world view of the composer, but it does this not through the manipulation of abstract sounds but through the manipulation of the personal expressions of others.

The two are different to listen to too. Audiences who are used to listening to compositions might find it easier to listen to improvisation when it is signposted or endorsed by a pre-determined structure, but at the same time it is difficult to really think yourself into the position of the musicians, as I suggested was useful in listening to free improvisation, so it still seems to be a hybrid form.

In retrospect it is difficult to understand why these two positions couldn't coexist more peacefully. There is one further point though and that is that the situation was exacerbated by the economic system, because composers receive royalties and performers don't. So if, for example, a structured improvisation was played on the radio, the composer would get much more money than the players. (This is what Howard Riley was referring to when he said he saw the political point of the argument), (page 242).

But it is important that the argument was essentially in the European context. Although in both the AACM and the JCG there are examples of musicians doing away with predetermined elements of structure completely, they were able to coexist easily with those musicians who used these elements. The presence of the tradition took away the relevance of the argument and it was almost non-existent.

The necessity felt by some of the MC members to adopt an exclusive free improvisation position can be seen as an indication firstly of their own distance from the Black music tradition,

and secondly, given that distance, of the greater importance that is then attached to the equality of relationships between group members and the complete freedom of individual expression. These two points are developed further in the next two sections of this chapter.

iii) Improvisation, Jazz and Cultural History

It will be clear from what I have written already that some free improvisors regard their music as having little to do with cultural history. Derek Bailey's position in particular treats the music in an ingenuous way (perhaps deceptively) as simply being an interesting thing to do. He skirts round the difficult subject of meaning and tradition in free improvisation by insisting that it is about the "nuts and bolts" of playing. In this part of the chapter I will consider the aims of the musicians in taking the music away from its association with the jazz idiom and the different legitimations that operate for musicians and listeners.

All seven members of the MC came from a background of playing a more traditional form of jazz (although Barry Guy had equally strong roots in straight music), but all have rejected the purely traditional forms of the idiom as being irrelevant to their expressive needs. In what sense are they irrelevant? Tony Oxley talking about the group Joseph Holbrooke:

> The search was always for something right to replace the things that sounded predictable and wrong. But there is something I would like to point out. During the whole of that time I don't think I ever made any intellectual decision to limit myself. The exclusion of the jazz vocabulary was an emotional act of feeling. Sometimes there's an assumption that this sort of thing is done just to be different. That's totally wrong. It's an emotional demand that you have to meet. When you're wearing chains you don't become aware of them through intellectual processes. You can feel them.
>
> Improvisation, p.106.

Derek Bailey was more technical about the specific changes in the same group:

> The main stimulus, however, was to escape from the lack of tension endemic in tonal

> or modal pitch constructions. The 'tension and release' myth upon which most scalar and arpeggio patterns, phrases and designs are based seemed to us no longer to be valid. In these closed systems there is a circular quality to the improvisation which means that the release is built into the tension, that the answer is contained in the question. The effect is of slackness, blandness. The modal setting particularly, without the restriction or discipline of an idiom, seemed to invite a facile vacuous type of improvisation. It was to escape from this that we turned to a more atonal, non-causal organisation of the pitch. Much of our language now was arrived at by the exclusion of the elements we didn't want, which very often turned out to be mainstays of the tonal language, and by a much more consistent use of the more 'dissonant' intervals.
>
> ibid. p.104.

Although Bailey is still talking about "nuts and bolts" here, his discussion of tension and questions and answers implies a change in the meaning of the jazz tradition as time passes. For him it was losing its excitement and feeling of nowness. This implies that the meaning of the music must be understood not just in terms of the phenomenological moment, as human activity, but also in terms of the cultural moment as related to a developing history. This leads on to Howard Riley's position which is to consider the essential element of jazz not to be a particular sound or activity but as a certain <u>attitude</u> to playing:

> In a certain sense I would certainly class what I do as jazz, but the thing I don't like about that label is that people tend to take it as a style rather than as an attitude, and I can't stand jazz in the style sense, it drives me crazy when you're expected to play certain cliches in order for it to be jazz. But as a creative process it definitely is jazz what I do. I would say that all the members of the co-op were definitely jazz musicians and still are in that sense. But of course it isn't jazz in the sense of $\frac{4}{4}$ time, play a tune and play on modes and things.

Paul Rutherford echoes this point about jazz becoming over-stylized:

> The only music, apart from folk music where there's some improvisation is jazz. But the thing is that jazz itself has become rather formalised. In styles on trombone you have to sound like J.J. Johnson, on trumpet like Miles Davis or Dizzy Gillespie, on tenor sax like Coltrane, to the point of actually copying solos.... which to me is the complete negation of improvisation and the original excitement that jazz was - this new music, this unique music where people actually made the music for themselves. Jazz has become incredibly formalised - even the new jazz.

For most of the Co-op members it was the immediacy and spontaneity of jazz that attracted them towards it; however, the stylized aspects of it - the Americanness, the Blackness - are still clearly audible in their music in different degrees, because an attitude to playing can only be expressed through the use of specific material. It is impossible to discard cultural reference points completely.

> Howard Riley: I can hear there are certain things that came out in me that are obviously American music because in the 50s that was all that was happening. I was playing bebop in clubs, accompanying tenor players and that's going to be in there somewhere.

One of the things in their music, then, is jazz, but they all emphasise that it is not nearly so closely related to America and is significantly different from the music the present generation of Black Americans such as the AACM are playing.

> Paul Rutherford: I don't deny the influence and importance of the jazz thing <u>but</u>, and I'm adamant about this, we are playing our music in Europe. We have got a music that is different from the Americans. We have been influenced by jazz and still are but we are European musicians and we also have the European tradition to fall back on -

> for example the atonal school and the aleatoric school, which are European situations and, let's face it, jazz has an African basis but also in its formative years it had a European basis, a strong European influence. So I think it is correct to say that jazz is an Afro-Euro-American music. Our music is a Euro-music.

The group which Rutherford organised in the early 70s, 'Iskra 1903' consisting of himself with Barry Guy and Derek Bailey, probably showed these European influences more clearly than any other groups from within the Musicians' Co-op. Although Rutherford retained a jazz feeling by the use of slurs and glissandi in his trombone playing, the overall sound was similar to avant-garde chamber music, emphasised by the lack of percussion instruments and by the generally low volume. (Guitar and double bass both used amplifiers but this was for the sake of electronically transforming the sound rather than volume). And yet it still retained the spontaneity of jazz allowing for a very detailed interaction between the musicians at the level of small details.

Howard Riley actually believes that the English improvisors are extending the jazz tradition in a more interesting way than the Americans and that since the middle 1960s the centre of attention for new developments has shifted from America to Europe. Of course, if jazz is defined as Black American music, as it is for example by Archie Shepp in the passage quoted on page 220, this is logically impossible. Riley is aware of this and feels that this definition of the music has actually worked against European musicians being recognised for their contributions. He feels that the attitude of the jazz press particularly is sycophantic towards Black Americans and that this has a negative effect on audiences. It is undoubtedly true that most of the British jazz press does have this attitude. A particularly pertinent example was the visit to London in March 1979 by the Art Ensemble of Chicago, when newspapers such as the Melody Maker and Black Music and Jazz Review dwelt on

the event for months afterwards with interviews, reviews and gossip, much of it in a tone that is normally reserved for pop stars. However, whether this influences or merely reflects the feelings of the jazz audience is difficult to assess.

I suggested in the Chicago section that the Art Ensemble of Chicago are partly in the business of selling 'authentic' Black music to white audiences and obviously this is an economic activity that is more or less impossible for European musicians to take part in. What this points to is the tension between the style of jazz as it has been established historically (the jazz idiom) and the attitude of jazz musicians and improvisors as described by Howard Riley. In other words, the qualities in jazz which attracted Riley and the other Co-op members to it as musicians were not exactly the same as those which attracted much of its European audience to it.

As Riley says, he understands it as an attitude to playing, or a method. Its essence for him is that it offers a practical context for individual creativity at its highest level. It is a method ideally suited to a musician pursuing a free expression of his own. However, as I emphasised in the introduction, the whole body of music which has existed under the title of 'jazz' through this century has been not only the free expression of individuals but also the expression of a shared culture. For European musicians their distance from the heart of this culture has meant that the specific features of the cultural language - in other words the whole paraphernalia of rhythm, swing, jazz sound, the blues and so on - having originally attracted them to the music, have in the long term had less pull on them.

The difficulty lies in the meaning for the audience. One of the absolutely basic features of the attraction of jazz for European audiences, was its foreignness, its 'otherness' to European traditions. This was one of the points I took up in a conversation with the bass player Dave Holland. He is in a particularly strong position to draw comparisons because of

his personal history. He lived in England until 1968 and was involved with both the free improvisation and jazz scenes. He then moved to New York and became an important part of the Black jazz scene. Since then he has been one of the few people to maintain a strong involvement with both scenes. Dave Holland understood the basic appeal of jazz as being rhythmic:

> It's the rhythm of it that is so communicative - at least initially... I think it's a liberating thing to be moved by music physically and so jazz music caught on like wildfire. The period it came - the 1900s - was a period when a very strict situation was happening in society. Along with the Charleston, the flapper bit and the whole mood of the jazz era, jazz was taken very much to be the new spirit - the new music.
>
> It was objected to all along the way. People opposed the music on various racial grounds; it was known as the devil's music - it was played in bars and had this blaring sound and an extrovert kind of situation. But it became an underground thing and for white people it was very much a liberation. It was a look into the Black world - the Black world of feeling. It was a way of sharing the culture. I guess it happened in visual art too; there was an African influence at that time.

Thus Holland suggests that it was the particular sounds of jazz expressing a different cultural attitude ("the Black world of feeling") which made it popular around the world. Its sensuousness and physicality gave it a feeling of liberation when seen in a European context.

If this is so, as I believe it to be, the whole European audience for the music has been built up on the idea of otherness, and a definition of themselves as outsiders. Since this otherness is based on the notion of Black culture it is difficult for European musicians to keep their audience with them if they take the music too far away from Black music. So for example, if they stop using jazz rhythm, swing and sound, as has been the tendency with the music we are discussing, they are in danger of being defined by listeners as taking the music

back towards the very music which they consider it to be other to. That is, European music. And this in fact has been the critical charge against the MC musicians made by many followers of jazz, who feel that the spontaneity and individual expression which have been preserved are not sufficient to compensate for the loss of this feeling of otherness in the music. The MC musicians are thus trying to make a new otherness from a music that is already defined in terms of otherness, and if this is considered in terms of simple polarity between two extremes, they are back where they started. The feeling of wanting to maintain the otherness of the music is also the cause of the ambivalence in David Boulton's remarks about the Englishness of the type represented by Elgar, Delius and the rest inevitably being brought into jazz, for it is specifically this aspect of Englishness which many followers of jazz have been glad to get away from.

Thus the process of cultural legitimation for the innovating European jazz musician is doubly difficult. However, for the practising musicians in the MC, the legitimation starts from their commitment, the fact that they are doing what they are doing. Their stance is strongly artistic and in this sense the legitimation of their music comes from what they feel as strong "internal necessities" (Evan Parker).

I suggested to Parker that it seemed strange that a music produced by a cultural experience such as that of Black Americans should be so relevant to English people. He said that that question doesn't arise in the normal listening experience. You put a record on and it doesn't matter where it comes from.

WM: Yeah, that's how it happens, but it seems that when you talk about it in more wide political and social terms that in some way the music you have been internalising is relating to a political struggle of which you are not part.

EP: I don't accept that.

WM: Well, a social relationship that is not one that you're involved with. If the music reflects

social relationships other than just in the group, in the wider society....

EP: Yes. On the other hand, there was a certain point in my playing where I became convinced about a certain line of my own, and at that point I started to take myself more seriously. In other words it was looking for a more intense involvement with the music. A full-time involvement. And at that point I didn't feel I was doing anything that I shouldn't be doing. I didn't feel that I needed to ask anybody's permission to do it. I was operating from an internal necessity, and if the web of influences that brought that about is a complicated one that involves references to other cultures of which I am not part then we have to look for the explanation in the complexity of global life. The global village.

WM: I can see that as an explanation of your position now, but I was wondering perhaps if you could look back on certain stages of your development and say if perhaps the way you were listening to the music that was coming in was actually a misinterpretation of the social relationship involved in it.

I mean say jazz for a lot of teenagers might have been a symbol for a generational revolt which was not part of its production, so actually the otherness of it from their own culture would be more important than its positive content.

EP: Well I don't think so because that would be an uncritical kind of following of the music and I never had that. There were always certain people playing so called jazz that I liked and others that I wouldn't even care if I never heard again, and the influence has been certain specific players, not 'jazz', not the idiom as such but the certain specific individual responses to the idiom and/or contributions to the idiom.

The discussion here points to the different ways of conceiving music of musicians, listeners and cultural historians. There is a tendency for different questions to be uppermost in their minds. For the musician it is "How can I make my own music?", for the listener it is "What does this music sound like?", and for the cultural historian it is "How did this music come to sound like it does?"

So, for example, musicians are likely to be very interested in the common elements of language that they share with other musicians, whereas cultural historians will be interested in analysing the differences between jazz in different countries.

For Dave Holland, the power of the jazz tradition is so strong that he believes it can communicate a human essence across cultural barriers.

> I think the music's message is a universal one really - that's why it transcends national barriers and boundaries. It communicates to everybody - it's an international language.

He has thus been willing to embrace the jazz tradition in its totality and has referred to his own position as being "a guest in the Black culture".

Tony Oxley, by contrast, found it was necessary to get away from this same tradition before he could feel he was involved in a universal communication.

> One of the remarkable things about the Sheffield experience for me was that I felt that I suddenly wasn't involved in the jazz language but that I was involved in a universal language. And I feel that now. A music that carries its own judgements and intentions and is not something simply tagged on to the end of jazz. That was an enormous liberating force.

quoted in D. Bailey, Improvisation, p.106-7.

These two positions can be explained in terms of the different personalties of the musicians, but the interesting thing about them is that both refer to this feeling of being involved in something that can communicate with anyone. This brings me back to the point I made in the introductory chapters about a new way of explaining music being required. For whether the music is defined as being essentially Black music or not, it

is undeniable that through this century there has developed a new kind of mobility of cultural expression whereby music that originates from a particular social group in a particular society can be taken and used by individuals and groups all over the world to express their special needs. Aspects of its meaning, then, can be transformed.

One final point on this subject, from Evan Parker again. He accepted that there might be some national characteristics in the music, but felt it much more significant that musicians from all over the world search each other out and play together. Thus rather than being an expression of any particular race or class, the situation is, for Parker, akin to scientific research.

> I think the gravitation is, in the first instance to do with musical predilections. Excitement, simple excitement about sharing common ideas. The way that scientists will gravitate to different departments in different laboratories from all over because it's the specific work that's going on under that particular professor that interests them. That's the place they want to be, because that's where the ideas that they're most excited by are being tested and developed. And it's the same with the various schools within the music - there are certain ideas that interest you. People gravitate towards the ones that they feel most strongly attracted to.

This analogy is interesting because it completely takes away the direct communicative requirement from music. Music is seen not as a cultural expression but as a specialised form of knowledge which must be researched in order to develop. If this is accepted then the only meaningful context for the music is the current 'state of the art' as a whole. If judged in these terms there is no longer a need felt to communicate either with a large audience or with a particular social community.

From a practical point of view, in England, where this music depends very much for its professional existence on state subsidy, this argument is useful in pressurising the Arts Council to assess the value of the music in its own terms rather than on its relative popularity for audiences.

Thus, in the context of a society which accepts the principle of subsidising art for its inherent value, it is logical for musicians to push their artistic consciousness to the extreme. This is ironically analogous to the way the market pushes the consciousness of musicians in the opposite direction. The two forces between them will tend to increase the separation between market-oriented music and 'art' music.

To take the comparison one step further, one could say there are two ways in which musicians might feel they are involved in something that is universal. Firstly, by making music that is popular with a mass audience, and secondly, by making their music from a rigorous personal creativity and inventiveness and choosing their influences and cultural reference points freely from around the world, rather than having them imposed by their own personal background.

The overall context in which the MC musicians are working has taken them further and further away from the jazz tradition which was their original inspiration. Both the economic context of a market place which is modified by state subsidy and the social cultural context of a jazz audience which looks to another society for the otherness it seeks makes the social meaning of the music very different from that in the Chicago context.

In Chicago I said that it was very important that the AACM coexisted with its own tradition which I represented with the blues at Teresa's. In London it is this that the MC musicians

were trying to get away from. Music as an expression of a known and shared truth for a stable community, the "closed systems" described by Derek Bailey (page 254), without the specific social functions which they were given by the adherence to the "restriction or discipline of an idiom" became "vacuous" and "facile". Of course, in Chicago the social function was there, but in London it wasn't. Thus the social context required a different music.

iv) Social Meanings, Politics and Ways of Listening

In the previous section I looked in detail at the aims the musicians in the MC have in making music as they do, and how these relate to the way the jazz tradition has developed in Europe. This could be called the creative context of the music and is thus part of its social meaning. In other words, to a certain degree, the simple fact of whether the music is made by English or American musicians has an effect on its meaning, both for creators and audience.

The absence of any implicit link with a community in English improvisation means that more attention is focussed on other aspects of its social meaning and it is these that I will investigate in this section paying particular attention to those meanings that may have political significance.

Starting from the MC's image as a quasi-political action group, I then examine the social meaning in its radical 'newness'. I then consider the music's accessibility, in terms of anyone being able to take part and relate this to the MC's professional aims. Lastly, I investigate the extent to which the content of the music conveys a social meaning and compare the social relationships that are expressed by several different recorded improvisations.

The public face of the MC was superficially an aggressive one. Here was a group of angry young men who seemed to be blatantly trying to draw attention to themselves. Not only did they organise their own concerts, but also they openly criticised other organisations working in the same field such as the Jazz Centre Society which itself, at that time, was certainly an 'alternative' organisation.

The argument was basically a straightforward one but not one that could easily be resolved. On the one hand, the JCS argued

that since audiences were small for free improvisation concerts and there weren't many musicians playing it, it shouldn't form a very large part of the JCS programme. On the other hand, the MC argued that although audiences were small, this was because audiences hadn't been exposed to the music enough to learn how to understand and enjoy it. Furthermore, the JCS being an English organisation the MC believed that it had a special responsibility to foster and develop what they (the MC) considered to be a unique and important development in the international history of jazz music.

In fact it certainly was the best resolution of this problem that there should be two separate organisations. Because of the JCS's commitment to presenting a broad spectrum of contemporary jazz, they were unable and unwilling to make free improvisation a priority and subsidise it at a higher rate than other sorts of jazz. It made sense, therefore, to form an organisation that would do this.

I have already noted the way the first press conference of the MC was reported in the Melody Maker (3/10/70), where emotional attacks on the JCS by MC members are contrasted with a calm, concerned reply from Dave Green of the JCS who is "sad to be attacked by musicians whom one respects and for whom one has every sympathy".

As I have also noted, the aggressiveness of the MC towards the JCS was overplayed by the Melody Maker. According to other reports of the meeting there was much more emphasis on the positive plans for action. And also not all the criticism was directed against the JCS, some of it was against the commercial jazz magazines such as Melody Maker!

However, the point is that the Melody Maker is a widely read newspaper and was, on the whole, building up a political image of the MC. Whilst the issue was never explicitly discussed in

political terms, analogies were often implicit in the text of reviews. For example:

> Sunday's Musicians Co-operative concert at Ronnie Scott's is the first indication that revolutionary musicians are now prepared to take revolutionary action in order to promote their own interests.
>
> MM, 10/10/70.

Thus simply by taking some positive action the MC acquired a radical leftist political image. This may be compared to the leftist political image gratuitously acquired by the Art Ensemble of Chicago in Paris as I described in Chapter three (page 148) and as exemplified by Alfred Willener's general discussion of free jazz (Willener, pp.230-260). It is also very similar to the political image that was deliberately built up by Bill Dixon for the Jazz Composers' Guild in New York. It is normal for avant-garde movements in any cultural form to be identified popularly with political ideas from the left because of their shared opposition to the status quo. However, in the MC as in all other avant-gardes, when the content of their music and their specific actions is examined, the political reality is much more complicated than the Melody Maker's simple equation between revolutionary music and revolutionary political action might suggest.

Presenting concerts was a sort of action that all the members could agree on easily, but when it came to deciding who should play in them there was already a division of opinion. Paul Rutherford explains:

> There was a political line in say keeping a tightness or dynamic in the organisation. But there wasn't a singular or even a plural party identity. It was musico-politics I would say. I don't think socially there was a lot of difference in the politics of everyone. I mean everyone I think was basically left wing in one way or another, so there was never any problems in that sort of sense. But the actual differences

> emerged in musical policy, the actual partisan politics weren't a problem.
>
> I mean I had the idea that the priority should be for free music, but we should also put on more conventional jazz groups that weren't really working so much. Groups like Mike Osborne's band, Harry Miller's band. I think I saw other people in a situation whereby they weren't playing exactly the same music as us but in their position towards the establishment they were in the same situation and therefore from that point of view I thought we should offer them playing opportunities. Tony (Oxley) wanted much more of a commitment from the musicians themselves. If they wanted work they should do something to get it themselves.

Rutherford is thus implying that the music has a certain political identity simply because it isn't accepted by the establishment. As far as he is concerned, other musics share this relationship too, so they should be included, even if the musicians aren't consciously aware of the political issues involved. Tony Oxley was more interested in helping this special area of music that they were involved in and less keen on expending energy on helping musicians who weren't willing to help themselves.

Of course, most artistic innovations are slow to be accepted by the establishment, and often their political character is completely lost when they are incorporated into the wider culture. So is there any deeper way in which free improvisation could be considered radical? Rutherford is actually a member of the Communist Party and I asked him what relationship he sees between his political views and his music.

> Well, I do see improvised music as being radical, or maybe I should say if one is radical, then one could feel the radical implications in improvised music because it is very much an underground music. Improvisation is a situation which can't be assessed or pigeon-holed into academic formulas. By necessity it's led to a development of instrumental techniques

> which in the eyes of musicologists or the lay public is a distortion of instrumental technique which they can't relate to. So they often wipe it off and say it's not music... The whole idea of any form of improvisation in the arts or science is development and it's very often going into unknown territory and even the person involved in the experiment isn't totally aware of where it's going to finish.

I suggested that this was a fairly loose definition of radicalism and would include a lot of music that couldn't be considered socialist by any criteria the Communist Party might use. Rutherford answered in terms of defining the function of the musician.

> I don't believe that however radically or socialist or communist inclined any artist is that a work can be termed a socialist piece of art. The artist is for a start in quite a lucky situation in that he's free to create, therefore that slightly elitist situation, if he's committed to socialism must be to keep the public's consciousness ticking over, pushing it all the time, because in Marxism you're not just talking about social and economic change, you're also talking about spiritual and intellectual change because you can't develop a socialist society with capitalist mentalities - it just won't work.

Rutherford pointed out that the basic alternative to this would be to try to consciously produce music that the working class 'wants' and, since this is what the present commercial media do anyway, he thought it essential to have some notion of <u>developing</u> what people 'want' rather than simply responding to their wishes. When socialist musicians have taken the latter approach, the results have often been embarrassingly patronising.

The difficulties in these two approaches seems to be that they both start from the position of being a <u>musician</u>, producing something <u>for</u> the people. There are other possibilities if one

expands the idea of musician to include education and community work. Rutherford is aware of this and feels uneasy about the fact that music-making is often thought of as the sole province of skilled professionals. He believes that the creative approach taken by improvisors could be much more widespread.

> I see the fact of making music-making a genuine part of society as important, not this little activity that is indulged in by a few professional musicians, but an activity that is militantly observed by everyone. So that people don't look at music-making as being a way of escaping from the usual society but of music-making as a positive contribution to the real human development of people in a very open society, you know.

Although this change in the social role of music is held as an ideal by Rutherford and other members of the Musicians' Co-operative, it has remained just that since their practical stance of professionalism has dominated most of their other objectives. It was left to other organisations and individuals to take a practical approach to widening the participation in music making. For example, John Stevens has constantly organised workshops in improvisation that concentrate on collective techniques for playing together rather than developing individual virtuoso techniques, and in 1970 he actually toured England with a large group made up of both skilled musicians and 'unskilled' 'non-musicians'. In this group there was a division of labour appropriate to the skills of the performers, so the result was not a music that was equally expressive of all the individuals involved but a collective creation to which people were able to contribute at different levels.

The other important example is the Scratch Orchestra, organised by Cornelius Cardew in the early 1970s. This started from the principle that a new music should be built up from scratch, and that it was irrelevant whether the musicians had traditional technical skills or not, the important factor being their commitment.

The MC, then, wasn't practically involved in increasing participation in music (although they did present non-co-op groups at concerts) and any effect they may have had in this respect must be seen as a result of the example of their playing. For although they were concerned with developing highly refined 'craftsmanlike' technical approaches to their instruments, they did this in such a personal way and discarded so many of the 'rules' that they implicitly proposed the possibility of a much wider range of musical techniques, and hence a wider range of participation, based on self-legitimation.

Rutherford sees the use of virtuoso technique not as being exclusive but as being appropriate to the music:

> .... the music has determined to what extent you extend the techniques of the instrument. So it's not virtuosity for the sake of virtuosity, it's a situation that comes out of the development of the music itself.... Conventional techniques are alright for conventional music, but music that's developing all the time needs a consecutive developing attitude to it from both performer and listener.

Thus, once again, for the musician the actual musical development is primary. The social implications might be there too, but it is seen as very important, not to let these limit the expressiveness of the individual musician. This eventually produces a social meaning of a different sort.

Evan Parker:

> I wouldn't say I'm making my music particularly for a select group of critics, I'm making my music in relation to a certain community of musicians. Something has to come out which makes sense among us, between us, and if it has that capacity, then surely it is going to communicate outside the circle of musicians at some point, on some level, because if it's true between the musicians it must be true outside the music too.

Coda, no. 167, p.3.

Elsewhere Parker has described how this communication happens within a group and hence how he considers the activity of improvising as being socialist. He was writing specifically about the relevance of virtuoso technique to improvised music.

> In free improvisation the aim is simply 'to make some Music'; levels of skill called on will depend on the specifics of the music as it emerges; the degree to which an individual will feel it appropriate to interpolate personal idiosyncrasies will vary from piece to piece. Analysing the music as a sequence of instants at each of which each participant is free to make any one of many choices is finally artificial in the sense that the piece of music as it emerges will almost invariably generate its own logic and therefore suggest its own requirements.
>
> Virtuosity in free improvisation could therefore be defined in a way that combines these two aspects; firstly the ability to develop an individual sound, something personal to each player and, secondly, the ability to respond to the sequential logic of each piece of music as it unfolds.
>
> The social justification for music that is in this sense so profoundly introspective must finally depend on the social use made of it - both by musicians and listeners. Music that is made by procedures of mutual consent, involving fully creative capacities of those involved can be seen as analagous to the working of a new social order.
>
> It can also be seen as escapist, exploitative and politically irrelevant. The crux is in the music itself as it exists in real times and places, not in the theoretical accompaniment. It is for the music itself to convince us of its social usefulness. A minimum definition of virtuosity might be then: the ability to play music for socialism.
>
> MFS newsletter, no. 6, p.8.

For Evan Parker then, free improvisation is socialist because it is "made by procedures of mutual consent" and involves "fully creative capacities of those involved". What appears to be a simple matter of making sound emerges to be a much more complex

social communication. However, in terms of listening Parker believes that this aspect of the music is fairly elusive.

> ... because it's the kind of politics that recognises the psychological differences between individuals, it's not easily equated with any prevalent political party.
>
> It's not sort of straight-forward Marxism, or, I mean, it would touch on ideas of all kinds of ideologies I think.

The importance of this aspect of the music will vary according to how the listener hears it, because it is buried deep in the music.

> Deeper makes it sound like more important. Maybe I mean deeper in the sense that it's harder to extract. Harder in, harder to sift out. But the information is there, on many levels... to be sifted in the listening process. I think the amount of information that can be sifted from the music depends on the experience and expertise of the listener. The training, the pitch of training that the listener reaches which comes with experience.
>
> For the guy that hears it, it's an essential feature, but for the guy that doesn't hear it, it's an irrelevance - it's something that's not there for him.

Thus we may say that there is a political meaning inherent in the production of the music that in certain social contexts can be perceived by listeners. It will be easiest to perceive if the listener can imagine what it is like to be one of the performers - the way of listening that I mentioned being important for improvised music in general. The listeners' ability to do this will depend largely on cultural background.

I would therefore add to Parker's explanation that it is not just <u>listening</u> experience that is relevant but also <u>social</u> experience. This explains why, for example, many Black Americans

who are closely involved with their own avant-garde are unable to recognise the value and meaning of the European improvisation. As Archie Shepp observed, it doesn't speak of slavery and racial oppression. With only a very few exceptions, the Black musicians see the chief contribution of the European musicians to be specific developments of instrumental language which are available for incorporating into the Black tradition. Free improvisation as a form in itself they see as limited and only of passing interest. I discussed the European music with many Americans while I was there and this was certainly the general opinion of musicians and listeners alike. The preferred European musicians were normally ones that stayed close to the jazz idiom. Additionally, the fact that there is a growing number of young white musicians spread across the United States who have been very strongly influenced by the music of Musicians Co-op members and other European improvisors, supports Shepp's point that the relevant social experience is partly racial.

So, to recap briefly, I have now suggested three criteria by which free improvisation as played by members of the MC might be considered to have a radical or socialist flavour to its social meaning. Firstly, the fact that it is always changing and thus presents a challenge to the listener keeping the consciousness "ticking over". Secondly, its capacity to encourage wider participation by its use of personal rather than schooled techniques (this one is relatively latent in the MC). Thirdly, its capacity to present in the music an analogy to "the working of a new social order".

The first two can be judged only in terms of specific times and places and very much on the basis of whether they do work like this for listeners. The extent of their effect is difficult to judge, but certainly during the last ten years a large number of players have emerged who are less dominated by schooled

techniques and this is partly due to the influence of MC members. The 'consciousness' argument applies only for the people who do listen to this music and these are few in number compared to the mass culture statistics in our society. However, what is clear is that the proportion of passive consumers in the audience for free improvisation is much smaller than for other sorts of music. The majority of the regular audience actively take part in one way or another, whether by playing (a lot or a little), or by organising, or writing.

The third criterion should be analysable in the music itself and I propose now to discuss this further by referring to some recorded improvisations.

I will start with a record that can be seen as transitional to free improvisation, a piece of music that is highly structured and yet contains many of the important ingredients which would be developed later. This is the piece Oliv II by the Spontaneous Music Ensemble (Polydor Standard 2384 009). The music was recorded in 1969 and the group consists of John Stevens (percussion and glockenspiel), Maggie Nichols (voice), Trevor Watts (alto sax) and Johnny Dyani (bass).

> The piece starts with a slow theme played in unison by alto, voice and glockenspiel. The upper register of the alto and the glockenspiel give it a very pure childlike quality. It is a gradually developing theme mainly in groups of three or four notes with short spaces between each group. It exploits a restricted range of pitch chromatically but with particular emphasis given to certain diatonic intervals such as the major seventh. The theme, which lasts about three minutes, sets the mood for the whole piece, which turns out to be a low key understated meditativeness.
>
> The bass enters at the end of the theme as a plucked low note and John Stevens changes to playing drums. The improvisation starts almost as two duets played together. Watts

> and Nichols remain in the tonal area of the theme, copying each other's notes and sounds in a relaxed slow way, while Stevens and Dyani exploit the percussive nature of their instruments. Dyani plucking short, fairly fast phrases on the double bass and Stevens concentrating on three drums played in short bursts with no stated metric pattern. Gradually the two duets intermingle into a quartet as the alto introduces some faster phrases and subtle tonal distortion and Stevens begins to use his cymbals as well as drums. The relationship between the four is conversational. They copy each other a lot using particular distinctive tonal intervals, especially the falling major seventh which is carried over from the theme.
>
> Maggie Nichols' voice becomes less pure as she uses slurs and a harder tone giving just a hint of sarcasm in her stance towards the earlier part of the piece. And then soon Maggie has settled on a long note, a middle Bb shortly to be joined by Trevor Watts playing the Eb below and John Stevens playing a gong. The bass continues improvising using these notes as a drone. Occasionally they alter them a bit in pitch, but not much. Afterwards all four play quiet short notes almost together with 2 or 3 seconds between each. Woodblock, alto, voice, high notes on bass - sometimes together, sometimes one just anticipates or lags slightly producing a sort of micro-counterpoint. They do this maybe twenty times, sometimes one person changes the note by a semitone. Then the double bass plays a low note and they stop.

What then are the relationships involved?

It is clear that the whole piece has been mapped out in advance. The progression from melodic theme to improvisation to long notes to short notes happens smoothly and without any feeling of hurrying or pushing. This very unified idea to the piece allows the musicians to concentrate on the subtle details of their relationships both to each other and to the whole piece, without needing to worry about the basic form. The result is a loss of ego. The listener's attention is focussed on the collective result of four people playing to a very simple idea. Rather

than being a full statement by the four individuals, each person makes small adjustments to the whole and allows space for the collective relationships to emerge.

Oliv II can't really be called a free improvisation, but the ideas of collectivity and communality expressed through it are important in some free improvisations. A similar collective relationship in a totally free context is shown by another record by the Spontaneous Music Ensemble made a year earlier in February 1968. This is Karyobin, recorded by a line-up of John Stevens (percussion), Evan Parker (soprano sax), Derek Bailey (guitar), Dave Holland (double bass and cello) and Kenny Wheeler (trumpet). (Island ILPS 9079).

> Where Oliv II could be described as aiming for a natural simplicity relying on techniques that are interpersonal rather than instrumental, Karyobin is based on combining these two aspects. There is an emphasis on speed and niftiness. The playing is still totally collective, but each individual's contribution is much more complex than on Oliv II. The musicians use their own distinctive techniques,for example Evan Parker uses flutter tonguing which gives a multiple attack on some of the notes he plays in the middle of fast phrases and this has a close relationship with the fast stickwork which John Stevens uses on the cymbals. The musicians frequently echo each other, copying and extending each other's phrases but always leaving space for the music.to develop collectively. It moves in short surges of several seconds length and although the musicians don't play rhythmically together, they tend to play phrases of similar lengths and speeds which enables them to mesh together very closely. Many of the phrases they use have an atonal feel to them similar to that used by some serialist composers such as Pierre Boulez, but the free flow of the music is totally different to composition, especially in the way the percussion is used. Although there are no specific roles in the group, there is a tendency for the guitar and bass to stay more in the background partly because they often play slower phrases than the others. But this is actually a variation technique in the music and whereas the saxophone, trumpet and drums contribute to the short climaxes by

> playing more continuously, the bass and guitar do so by playing faster.
>
> Overall the record is again low key. They never play very loud and the dominant feeling to the group relationship is a respect for what the other musicians are doing, a sort of collective 'after you' approach. As far as each individual is concerned there is a fairly high level of coherent continuity between subsequent phrases, but because of the way the music moves in surges of sound of a few seconds duration, there is a continual feeling of the musicians deliberately taking stock of the situation as it is developing, of pausing to hear how their own contribution is relating to the whole.

As with Oliv II there is a feeling of loss of ego in the sense that the whole that is created is much more important than the sum of the individual parts, although the feeling is not so extreme in this case. This sort of communal group relationship is often associated particularly with John Stevens and groups he organises under the title 'Spontaneous Music Ensemble' and it is possible that he exerted the strongest influence on the music. But certainly by the present time this sort of relationship has come to be widely expressed, and it is understandable more as a question of particular combinations of individuals playing this way together rather than the style of the individuals themselves. All the musicians on these two records, including Stevens, take different approaches when playing in different contexts as we shall see.

Comparing the two in terms of the social model they represent, we can say that Oliv II almost totally dwells on the communal aspect of the music, giving it a spiritual feeling, whereas Karyobin presents a model of individuals overbrimming with creative ideas expressed through a highly developed technique who continually curtail their personal impulses in favour of the collective. Thus in the later case there is a greater tension in the music.

Two records involving some of the same musicians which were made around the same time are ICP 004 by Derek Bailey and Han Bennink (percussion), (1969) and The Topography of the Lungs by Derek Bailey, Han Bennink and Evan Parker (1970).

So far as I can tell, curtailing personal impulses has very little relevance to these two records. Consequently they both come across as much less inhibited, more extrovert pieces of music. What they share with the SME is the use of a very fast vibrating sort of pulse as an element of unity and continuity which any of the musicians can slot into at any time to make a very direct relationship with the other musicians. The distinctive articulations of the musicians, their personal ways of attacking a note are very important. Thus Parker uses a very percussive method of flutter tonguing which propels his notes into the air and Bailey echoes this on the guitar by plucking the strings hard, and quickly deadening them, and using loud amplification to bring himself up tb the level of Bennink's 'fortissimo' drumming. It is loud and fast music. The pulse carries it forward on a wave of energy.

> Good Morning, Derek, one of the tracks on ICP 004, starts off with a short drum which is answered by feedback on the guitar and after a very brief call and response interchange Bennink is off into a fast barrage of various different metallic sounds played with sticks. Bailey goes along with this, playing fast single note lines on the guitar, atonal in feeling and punctuated with the occasional dissonant chord. Bennink gradually transfers his attentions to his drums as Bailey continues, then they both start breaking up the rhythm slightly, leaving small spaces. Bennink suddenly stops, and Bailey takes the opportunity to slow down and contrasts the high and low registers of his guitar. Bennink soon begins making intermittent eruptions behind Bailey who then speeds up again and they are both back in at full force. Bailey plays some accented high notes which he rapidly slides down from, then after some staccato chords he plays long wavering low notes. Bennink stops for two seconds while Bailey plays a rising arpeggio

> phrase and then they both get going again. Next comes the main contrasting passage in the piece as Bennink plays single strokes on his bass drum separated by a few seconds, and Bailey plays long wavering low notes and then higher ones using feedback. This section lasts about 30 seconds and is really the only unhurried passage in the piece. Bennink then gets into woodblocks and other dry sounds and then a tuneful rhythmic sort of drumming. He stops and Bailey continues on his own using harmonics and feedback. He is suddenly interrupted by a very loud short burst of sound from Bennink which he joins in with just as it stops. Bennink continues on his own and is then joined by Bailey strumming vigorously some dissonant chords. After some screaming suddenly Bennink stops again and the piece ends with Bailey playing a long low note with a very prominent seventh harmonic. It was ten minutes long.

In the case of this piece the relationships are very much dominated by Bennink starting and stopping which provides a continual challenge to Bailey to respond very quickly and coherently. Most of the time Bennink is either thumping something or not doing anything, in contrast to Bailey who works a lot of variety into a short passage. Occasionally there are brilliant flashes of them both doing something together, but they never stick on it. In fact, Bennink's drumming is so self-sufficient in terms of energy that it means Bailey can do almost anything while it is going on (except play quietly!). Sometimes he contrasts it with slow things, sometimes he races along too. He can also manipulate the pitch relationships in similar ways and give great breadth of sound to the music.

For the trio playing on Topography of the Lungs, there is more variety in the relationships. In certain respects it is very similar, for example Bennink often starts and stops very suddenly as in the duo. But when he does this the problem for Bailey and Parker is more complicated, because whereas in the duo Bennink's silence created extra freedom for Bailey to take

the music wherever he wanted, in the trio the remaining two must continue relating to each other as well as respond to Bennink's silence.

> On one occasion on the long piece Titan Moon they take one of Bennink's sudden silences as a cue to go in completely different directions, but after a few seconds Parker abandons his own line in favour of blending in with Bailey's slow sustained bent notes. In the trio the pitch relationships are obviously more important since there are two instruments which play different pitches. This gives Parker and Bailey a very intricate way of relating to each other and the music occasionally sounds like a dialogue over the top of Bennink's drum barrage. However, this never lasts for long and one of the characteristics of this record is the speed at which the relationships change. The overall basis of it is integrated trio playing with three independent related voices, but often there are periods of a few seconds when two come very close together or make an unexpected turn together, so the feeling is of constant give and take in the relationships. However, in contrast to Karyobin, this is all done under pressure. There is an implicit shared commitment from all three to push themselves and each other to the extreme. This applies to speed and intensity, particularly speed of technique and reaction. Also extremes of instrumental sound - pitch, loudness, expressive techniques. This gives the music a feeling of competitiveness and pushiness which is more or less absent from the Spontaneous Music Ensemble.

The feeling is actually of a collective music being striven for from assertion of self rather than denial of self, and this means that the interpersonal relationships are never resolved in the way that they are in the Spontaneous Music Ensemble but are always actively changing.

From these four records it is clear that the same musicians, working in different contexts, adopt different approaches to

playing because they have to cope with different problems, and that the music of a group comes about through implicit or explicit agreement amongst the musicians about musical objectives.

Another contrasting approach is shown by the group Iskra 1903 which was also active in the early 1970s. Once again it includes Derek Bailey on guitar and he is joined by Paul Rutherford on trombone and Barry Guy on bass. The group was formed by Rutherford with the deliberate intention of allowing very detailed playing to emerge by not including a percussionist.

> The overall ambience is quiet and careful in contrast to the fast loudness of the previous two records. Often the three musicians will meet around a particular note and very carefully manipulate the blending of their tones. Bailey plays much less percussively than on the other records and uses many quiet harmonics that in other contexts would simply be lost. Guy uses a bow most of the time on the double bass which takes it right away from the jazz tradition. They tend to stay very close together in terms of the level of intensity but often play very different ideas that together make a very rich and intricate counterpoint. The three instruments are close enough together in tone and pitch to make blending easy, and yet different enough to be clearly separated in the ear of the listener. Even when all three are playing loud, it is possible to hear very subtle and detailed inflections in the playing.

An analogy with conversation is useful for this music. The three musicians move on from subject to subject in a relaxed way. There is space for each to have his say and no feeling of competition. Sometimes they agree, sometimes they agree to differ, sometimes the differences are resolved, sometimes they aren't. Their statements are not deliberately provocative but tend towards the sensible and thoughtful. Each musician is constantly manipulating his degree of independence from

the group in a way that suggests a high degree of mutual trust amongst them.

There is one more relationship that I want to discuss with respect to this group of musicians, which has developed more in the second half of the 1970s. This is the tendency for musicians with very different styles and approaches to play together in the same group. In the ten years since the MC was formed most of the members have developed ways of playing that are substantially self-sufficient. They have all done solo concerts and made solo records and this, as Derek Bailey has pointed out gives them a different basis for group playing (see page 237). I have already discussed this approach in the section on composition and improvisation where I said it was the basis of Derek Bailey's group, Company. There was a certain precedent for it in the Music Improvisation Company which included Bailey, Parker, Hugh Davies (electronics) and Jamie Muir (percussion), in that the sound areas that Hugh Davies worked in were very different from the others'. Judging from their record on Incus 17, Davies tended to use noise textures rather than musical phrases and develops them slowly, often really not reacting much at the micro level at all. Also in this group climaxes were sometimes reached by some of the players but more or less ignored by others; who would just keep on doing what they were doing anyway.

An extreme case of people with diverse approaches playing together was at a recent concert in Bristol by Peter Brotzmann and Steve Beresford. The basis of Brotzmann's reed playing was energy flow. He made great waves of sound pushing every idea through to its emotional extreme and physically committing himself to it totally. Beresford played the piano, trumpet and toys, but a lot of his playing was based on suddenly changing from one idea to another unexpectedly, juxtaposing very diverse elements or playing ironically or humorously.

In terms of the relationship, this often had the effect of pulling the carpet out from under Brotzmann's feet and defined the two musicians very starkly as individuals. But it also gave the group a very wide range of expression and sustained an intense dynamic throughout the concert.

It is probably rare for musicians as diverse as these two to play together, but the whole series of records by Company on Incus (21, 23, 25, 26, 28, 29, 30) gives a good sample of music that is made from this standpoint.

I have been talking about relationships, social and musical, being able to express meanings. This is a way of talking about music that is unique to improvised music. Because each person is responsible for his own sounds it means that there is a special tension in the relationships that simply isn't there in composition. In listening to the music you have to conceive of the intention behind each separate strand and fit these together in your own mind, whereas in listening to composition one starts from the idea that the composer has already resolved, or at least determined, all the tensions and conflicts in terms of the sound but not in terms of the relationships between performers. This is a completely different listening attitude.

Thus in these descriptions and interpretations of recorded improvisations I have tried to show in detail how it is that the musicians are not only making music, but are making social relationships - sometimes even to the extent of making a community.

These are meanings that are inherent in the actual musical sound, but still their perception depends very much on the social context and it is impossible for musical communication to transcend the limits of its context. This has been pointed

out by the ethnomusicologist John Blacking:

> Music can express social attitudes and cognitive processes, but it is useful and effective only when it is heard by the prepared and receptive ears of people who have shared, or can share in some way, the cultural and individual experiences of its creators.
>
> Music, therefore, confirms what is already present in society, and it adds nothing new except patterns of sound.
>
> J. Blacking, How Musical Is Man? p.54.

Thus it is largely my own cultural and individual experience that causes me to place so much emphasis on these particular social meanings in improvised music. It is the fact that other musics in our society don't express these meanings that gives free improvisation such a strong relevance as an alternative or oppositional culture. Conversely, if more of our musics did express this sort of meaning, then that would suggest that we had achieved a society that was less hierarchical and more mutual and co-operative in its social structures.

> Evan Parker: I think the music is partly defined by what it's trying not to be, and that in a certain sense that's a useful attitude for a political analysis as well. You see how things don't work and therefore things that should be avoided. Organisational principles that should be avoided because they lead to certain inevitable degradations of the original intentions. Yeah. I wouldn't say that that's what I was hearing when I'm listening to a piece of improvisation but it's part of the whole cultural climate which gives improvisation its significance and which therefore focusses my attention on the importance of improvisation.

However, before I end this chapter, it is necessary to place

the music in one more context. That is the context of the everyday work of the professional musicians who make the music. Thus it is important to remind ourselves that improvising isn't just the construction of abstract social and political meanings, it's a straightforward practical activity as well.

WM: Is the radicalness of improvisation important to you?

Howard Riley: Well, I don't regard it as being particularly radical, so it isn't. I just see it as people getting together to do whatever they're doing. To me that's been the basis I've always worked on since I've started.

WM: But surely by implication it must have been radical when you started?

HR: I suppose so. It probably was from the outside, but for me it was a perfectly natural thing to do. When I heard Barry Guy playing I could relate to that. I thought "Ah, there's a bass player who's actually doing stuff I can relate to".

I mean I'd been playing for years with bass players who played 4. It's a great feeling, but I was 4 looking for something else. You just get to the point where you can't take it any more so I thought if I'm going to play with a bass, that's the way I'd like to hear it - lots of activity going on, lots of different sounds, lots of things to bounce off. So at the time it didn't seem radical, it just seemed very natural. But that again was because I saw it as a purely musical venture. I suppose it's naive, but I'm still shocked when people find it difficult, because it isn't difficult to me - you just sit down and play. I suppose if I can be objective about it I can see why people would regard it as a radical activity, but I don't think it is really. I don't think the people involved in it are particularly radical a lot of the time - not really. In fact I think a lot of the people involved in improvisation in ten years time will probably be running arts centres, handing out grants. In fact it's already happening.

Riley considered the commitment of Co-op members to their music was more important than their radicalness. One's scope for being radical, he suggested, was very much connected with one's level of commitment and hence one's economic dependence on the music. Whether it is 'your whole life' or not. He compared the MC to the present London Musicians' Collective which includes a much wider range of part-time and full-time musicians.

> If you're involved in something and have got a safety net to fall back on, it's always easy to be so-called 'radical'. It's much easier for someone earning a living at something else than it is if you're actually involved in the thing from day to day and you've got to face the reality of paying the rent. So there is that irony built into things which you will get in the collective because there are obviously a lot of people who are not dependent on the music for their existence and that enables and frees them to be far more critical in the worst sense. It's an easy kind of criticism that they can indulge in.

I'd like to see people taking more responsibility for their musical lives, if you like. The musicians I'm interested in are very centred - not self-centred, but centred in on what they're doing. They're dedicated and committed to what they're doing and I want to see that commitment. I think it comes across in the music - that's why it sounds, that's why it projects because there's commitment there - you're not sort of messing around. And you don't get that with a lot of things - it's like playing at something as opposed to doing it.

In this chapter on the Musicians' Co-operative I have tried to show how the particular musical and social forms which the musicians developed were the result of a complicated network

of social and cultural forces. Their distance, social and geographical, from the Black American jazz tradition has made it necessary for them to develop a music which is significantly different from that other music that was their original inspiration. In this general cultural context the particular forces that have defined their music further are the market place modified by state subsidy, and their special concerns with personal and original expression, professionalism, technical virtuosity, and equality of interpersonal creative relationships.

The freely improvised music made by members of the MC has now been recognisable as a distinctive musical form for over ten years. The seven musicians all have international reputations, and interest in this sort of music has been steadily growing in terms of numbers and depth. There are parallel musical developments in some other European countries and also in Canada and the USA (mainly amongst white musicians). But still the music has not built up an audience anything like the one for more traditional sorts of jazz. I have suggested two possible reasons for this. Firstly, the nature of the musician/audience relationship; that is the comparatively active stance that must be taken by the listener to enjoy the music fully. Secondly, the way in which the music defines itself in relation to other parts of our culture; that is it implies two aspects of 'otherness'. It is 'other' both in relation to the European straight music tradition and in relation to the Black jazz tradition. And since I have argued that these two are already 'other' from each other, both sides often see free improvisation as a weakened form of the 'other'. Thus for Archie Shepp, upholder of the Black tradition, the very concept of a European music calling itself 'jazz' was contradictory (see page 220). Nevertheless, the cultural position of free improvisation is clear, if complicated, and I have argued that there are strong social meanings that are uniquely expressed through this music, which Shepp's own cultural position would not allow him to acknowledge.

In England, this particular cultural moment that I have been talking about, addressing itself through its professionalism to particular international traditions and audiences, could only be expressed through the metropolis. The next chapter moves away from the metropolis to Bristol - 120 miles nearer the USA and with some unique historical links, but in terms of the cultural relationships of capitalism, one stage further away than London. In Bristol the cultural moment expressed through improvised music is different again as we shall see.

CHAPTER 7: BRISTOL

Bristol is where I have lived and worked for the last ten years. I was one of the people to start the Musicians' Co-operative six years ago and have been a member ever since. Thus the people I write about are my friends and colleagues (Ian Menter is my brother), and I am closely involved in the ideas and views that are expressed by them. It was indeed my involvement with BMC that became my underlying motivation for writing this thesis. I have not attempted to extricate myself from this, to look at it as if I were an outsider. Rather, I have tried to use my background of involvement as a way of looking deeper into the musicians' lives, in a way that would have been impossible for me to do in the other three cities.

Because of this the tone of this chapter is different from the previous three. Much of it is evaluative, in the sense that I am asking what sort of musical life is possible in Bristol, what sort of musical values it is consistently possible to put into action. Also, much of it is speculative because I consider possible futures for the musicians and the organisation. I feel moved to take this approach because of my own commitment to the BMC and my concern for its future.

i) Bristol Musicians' Co-operative

If you approach Bristol from the West the whole city is laid out in front of you. The features that immediately catch the attention are on hilltops. Near you, the long Georgian terraces of Clifton and the spire of Christ Church; beyond these the tower of the Wills Memorial Building and the high chimney of the main hospital; then in the distance the tall telecommunications tower at Lockleaze; further still are more green hills. Not on hills, but almost as prominent, are the high rise office blocks of the centre and the council flats of south and east Bristol. In the midst of all this at the top of Brandon Hill stands the Cabot Tower. Now it is relatively inconspicuous, but when it was built in 1897 it dominated the skyline. At the bottom of this hill are the Bristol docks and it was from here four hundred years earlier, that John and Sebastian Cabot set sail and discovered the mainland of America.

Tens of thousands of feet up in the air Concorde passes daily on its flight to New York collapsing the five hundred years of trans-Atlantic travel into three and a half hours. Bristol has always had a direct interest in this: one of the English bases of the slave trade; major importer of raw materials such as tobacco and sugar from the Empire; in the 19th century Brunel built the first Atlantic liners here; and then in the 1970s B.A.C. of Bristol was responsible for the English part of the Anglo-French supersonic airliner project.

Bristol's economic prosperity, then, has for a long time, been based on international relationships, many of a blatantly exploitative nature. Contradictions abound. For example, it was the Wills tobacco family (later to be incorporated into the Imperial Tobacco Group) who were the founders and major early benefactors of the University. Economic returns from the Empire were fast compared to the slow flow of cultural influences. In music, particularly, this was dependent on the

technology of the record player and a much more sophisticated development of capitalist marketing networks, both of which only occurred in the 20th century.

However, it is now true that Afro-American music has permeated the musical market place of Bristol and similar cities at all levels. Go and buy some trousers and you're likely to hear some Black American 'jazz-funk' music. Walk into almost any record shop and you'll find a wide selection of Black American records of many different kinds. If you know Bristol well, you'll even be able to find some AACM records. Go to a pub with live music and you're as likely as not to hear a local copy of Black music of one sort or another. Most likely it will be 'trad' jazz, but it could also be a modern sort of jazz-rock or funk, or blues influenced rock music. Even visit one of the arts centres and you are just as likely to hear a strongly Afro-American form of music as a straight European form. You might even hear the original article, brought to Bristol either by the enthusiasm of local musicians, as when bebop player Sonny Stitt played at the Bristol Bridge Inn, or by heavy state subsidy as when the free jazz tenor player Sam Rivers played at the Arnolfini arts centre.

Yet it isn't just the market place that has been permeated by Black American music; it isn't simply a commodity to be sold alongside chewing gum, Coca Cola and Kentucky Fried Chicken. As I have already emphasised, the meaning of this music has become an intrinsic part of English culture; many aspects of communal and personal feelings find expression through its forms. But it is my contention that away from the metropolitan centres these real meanings become dominated by the music's nature as a centrally produced and distributed commodity. In this context, the crucial problem for some musicians and listeners then becomes how to rescue the strong meanings felt in the music from being distorted and obscured by its position in the market place.

The original impetus for the forming of the Bristol Musicians' Co-operative was the feeling of exclusion from a musical culture which was increasingly cosmopolitan and centralised. The feeling of being on the receiving end of a long chain of cultural and economic actions that were not accessible to influence. Somehow, although this received culture was felt to be very important, one felt conversely that one was totally insignificant so far as the producers and marketeers of the culture were concerned. A practical choice presented itself:

> For the individual artist in a city such as Bristol, what this situation means is a straightforward choice - either you stay where your roots are and carry on your artistic practice, in whatever restricted form you can, or you head for the big city in the hope of finding fame and fortune. Of course it would be stupid to suggest that this is to be found in any great measure even in London, but there is little doubt that considerably more opportunities can be created there.
>
> Ian and Will Menter, 'Music and Colonialism', Musics no.3, 1975

In most cases for musicians to become nationally known in Britain it has been necessary for them to leave their home towns and spend at least some years in London. It is not only that there are more work opportunities there or that because the media are centred there it is easier to build up a reputation. Many musicians also feel strong artistic pressures to move to London since there is no doubt that in most areas of creative music there is a large community of musicians there and a more volatile artistic intercourse. Thus many musicians find it a more stimulating environment.

In this sense, then, the decision to stay in Bristol can be seen as a decision to accept certain limitations on the music, both economic and musical. "...carry on your artistic practice, in whatever restricted form you can". That these limitations are accepted is not an indication of passivity. They are the

result of conceiving the making of music in a context that is wider than that of music on its own. In other words, they arise from the belief that it should be possible to make a progressive, creative music in the context of a local community, without having to resort to marketing the music as a commodity internationally. Moreover, it was felt that to respond to the pressures of the market place would inevitably change the social meaning expressed in the music. In terms of the general forces that I described as acting on the music in Chapter one, the BMC can be seen as defining artistic pressures and community pressures as being very closely linked and as using this relationship as a way of opposing market pressures. In this sense there is a parallel with the AACM, although the nature of the community pressures is very different.

The Bristol Musicians' Co-op was started at the beginning of 1975 by a core of about 10 musicians who had been playing a jazz derived improvisation together for several years. Up to this time the only organisation that had existed was in particular bands trying to get gigs, normally in pubs and bars. The results were spasmodic. Pub landlords as a group are notoriously unreliable over booking bands, and musicians who play in pubs are so badly unionised that it is impossible for the Musicians Union to take any firm action to improve the situation. Communication between bands was also bad and the underlying aim behind the formation of the Co-op was to strengthen the <u>community</u> of musicians.

The idea right from the start was that the Co-op should be an open organisation, including any musicians who felt they could benefit from it and contribute to it, and at the first meeting it was clear that the tastes and experience of those present varied from very narrow to very wide. This was seen as an opportunity to expand our own musical tastes as well as those of our audiences. Gradually, however, it became clear that the

structure was best suited to musicians working in free improvisation, because for most other musics there are more alternatives available. It seemed that for these the Co-op could serve an immediate function but not an ongoing one. So for example several rock bands have used it as a way of getting started, playing their first few gigs and then moving on to other things.

Of the four organisations being considered in this thesis, the BMC is the only one that has membership open to anyone, and this has meant that it has had a more diffused identity than the others. Most of the members are part-time improvisors. Some have ordinary day jobs, others are involved in more commercial music as well as improvisation. Also the backgrounds and interests of the members are more varied. For example, some of the members have no identifiable links with the jazz tradition. However, I am going to continue the theme of this thesis by concentrating on those members who do have strong links with jazz and Black music and thus represent a fourth approach to developing the tradition.

Before I do this, it is necessary to place some perspective on the organisation by exploring the philosophical basis of music-making as a part-time activity. A convenient starting point is a paragraph I wrote in 1978:

> So far the Bristol Co-op's "road to music" has been to take the music very seriously, but not to live only for the music. The strength of the Co-operative idea should be that it enables you to make sense of your whole life rather than distorting other parts of your life "for the sake" of music. This is based on the romantic idea that music is the expression of the whole person in society rather than a technical gift given to a few people independently of the way they live.

Unpopular Music, p.5.

In this sense then, the starting point was a position that might have been considered romantically naive by the professional musicians of the MC. Nevertheless, the "romantic idea" was embraced by the BMC who weren't prepared to separate music from life.

The obvious way to understand part-time music-making is as a hobby or a leisure interest and if we were to take the model of other forms of music then this might seem correct. Indeed I think it would be true to say that most of the music that is made in the capitalist world today is made primarily for the personal satisfaction of the people making it, from the guitarist playing in his front room through to the public performances by amateur choral societies and opera companies, and of course the vast amount of music that is made in schools.

In BMC there is definitely an element of the leisure attitude in some of the members, but much more significant is the seriousness and commitment of most of the members who, even though improvisation is a part-time activity, nevertheless give it most of their available time and energy. These latter may be divided into two groups, those who would like to become full-time improvisors and those who wouldn't. However, even in the former group the notion of what a full-time improvisor is, is far removed from the notions of professionalism as exhibited by the Jazz Composers' Guild and the London Musicians' Co-operative.

The JCG and MC as I pointed out were pressure groups for professional musicians, designed to improve the conditions of groups of people who considered themselves repressed or undervalued. The AACM, I argued, had more concrete organic links to the community, which were expressed through Black consciousness, the feeling for the tradition of Black music and the concomitant responsibility for education within their community. This led to the importance of the AACM school and at some stages free concerts on the South Side beaches.

The BMC must also be understood more as a community organisation. Although it lacks the cohesiveness of a racial community to base itself on it is clear from the manifestos it has published that the intentions behind the organisation have been predicated on what are felt to be the needs of the Bristol community. The following list of objectives was published in January 1977:

> 1. The Co-op exists to encourage, assist and promote the production and performance of music for which there is little or no other outlet in Bristol and the West Country.
>
> 2. The Co-op acts as a point of contact for all people involved with such music and encourages the exchange of ideas and the formation of new musical associations.
>
> 3. The Co-op endeavours to form links with other people and organisations anywhere where this will be of mutual benefit. In particular, the Co-op seeks close contact with other people and organisations with similar objectives.
>
> 4. The Co-op will promote performances for musicians from outside the West Country who otherwise might never be heard there, and will seek performances for its own musicians outside the West Country.
>
> 5. The Co-op will attempt to increase the outlets for music with no commercial basis by applying pressure to commercial promoters, publicans, etc. to broaden their activities.
>
> 6. The Co-op will work to keep alive the idea that music is, above all, an important form of personal expression and communication, and that a healthy musical culture is a diverse and varied one.

Unpopular Music, p.50.

It can be seen from these objectives that the BMC was based very much on a general analysis of the music scene and not on furthering the ends of a particular group of musicians. Thus when the organisation began to become associated specifically with avant-garde music a statement was published explaining

why this was and attempting to broaden the scope.

> Since the Co-op was formed about 3 years ago, it has gone through various different phases and changes, putting on gigs and running workshops at many different places. During that time we have gradually acquired an image of elitist avant-garders, putting on 'Art' and not 'entertainment', playing for ourselves and not for the audience, and so on.
>
> BUT THIS IS NOT WHAT THE CO-OP IS REALLY ABOUT.
>
> The Co-op is an open organisation whose direction is defined by its members at any given time. It is open to musicians, non-musicians and learner-musicians who, for whatever reason, can't or don't want to work through the normal commercial channels, and who want greater control over all aspects of their music. If the Co-op is not what you think it should be, it is up to you and your friends to come along and make it into that. We are essentially a co-operative self-help group. So don't come along if you just want a gig - we're not a free promotion service, and we have enough work to do putting on the music of active Co-op members. But if you want gigs (or just want to play with others) and also want to take part in all the background activity and work that is essential for music-making, come along to our next meeting whatever your music is. The Co-op stands against the division of labour and against categorisation.
>
> Unpopular Music, p.52.

However, although the scope was broadened a little the Co-operative continued to be centrally concerned with improvised music, and as other musicians' co-operatives were started in other cities this was seen to be true of most of them. (Although some had much stronger punk/new-wave involvement).

While the promotion of concerts has always been an important part of BMC there have also been other activities which are equally important. These include workshops for both free improvisation and rock music, activities in the community such

as playing at street fairs and demonstrations and working with physically and mentally handicapped children and adults. This forms a continuing basis of activity upon which a full-time involvement can be built, and it is very different from the basis of activity in the London Co-operative.

Nevertheless when it comes to the individual musician, there are very strong contradictions to be overcome in sustaining this sort of activity, and, as I did in the AACM chapter, I have chosen to describe the various forces at work in relation to different individuals in the organisation. I start by talking about Ron Caines, because although he is not typical, he exemplifies all the contradictory pressures in a very striking way and is constantly pushed backwards and forwards between commercial and art music, between the jazz idiom and free improvisation, between art and craft, between individuality and collectivity, between theory and practice.

In contrast to Caines, Bob Helson has taken a firm stand on most of the issues and only responds to pressures very reluctantly. However, he pays the price for this in that his unadaptability often leaves him without much to do.

Caines and Helson are both full-time musicians although their income from music is very low. Ian Menter, the third member I look at, is a teacher and a part-time musician which substantially changes the nature of the pressures that act on him. He is able to hold them in balance in a way that is much more stable than Caines or Helson.

ii) Ron Caines

Ron Caines, who is now 40 years old, is one of the older members of BMC. He plays tenor, alto and soprano saxophones. He has no full-time job but divides his time between playing improvised music, playing a more commercial rhythm music, and painting. As well as being a member of BMC he is also chairman of the Artists Union, south west. The only one of these which provides any regular income is the rhythm based music and he plays at least once a week with his own band Chiconga in a local club. The money he makes from music is not enough to live on and he is partly supported by his wife who is a school teacher.

Having worked both as painter and musician for many years he has no delusions about the possibilities of success in economic terms and much of his view of himself is defined by his idea that he is a victim of an insensitive and unjust society.

> Being a painter and musician is like having two strings to my bow - both equally useless and offering ample opportunity for disenchantment. The system is pretty hard. I'm sure some musicians consider I'm a good painter, and some artists think I'm a good musician. I know what I think.

His playing goes back to his school days when he became interested in jazz through listening to AFN (American Forces Network) broadcasts on the radio. This was in the late 50s, the period of the trad revival in Britain, and this was at first the sort of music he wanted to play when he bought a clarinet. It was not until he was at art college that he changed to alto sax and discovered the music of Charlie Parker.

> In those days the only culture I knew about was jazz. There was no alternative rock music or anything. All my friends at grammar school were into it. Maybe some of my other friends they liked this new rock and roll that had just come out - which I hated. The bands I used to play in would play a lot of youth clubs and they'd want to hear rock and roll so there was always that problem. The top ten in those

> days was absolutely awful - typically English, Max Bygraves sort of stuff. For a young kid emerging on the scene England was a cultural desert, it really was. English films were awful, they had no relationship with people. The Ealing comedies and so on. So I'd be watching maybe Marlon Brando and James Dean. That made a big impact. I think people from my background definitely related to American culture without any question.
>
> Looking back on it, trad was trendy music at that time. The university rag procession had twenty jazz bands on it, all playing traditional jazz. I don't know whether it was a peculiar Bristol thing or not. What became known as modern jazz never got a similar following, and in fact Bristol still has this strange little thing in pubs with trad jazz and nothing for modern, and some sorts of modern have never ever happened in Bristol.
>
> When I heard Charlie Parker, I was completely knocked out - he was certainly the genius of his time and I just tried to play like him. I think at one time I was as good a Charlie Parker imitator as you could get.
>
> I used to divide people up into those who liked Parker and those who didn't and a great many jazz lovers didn't have any Parker records. They'd say "Oh yes, Parker, great" but they wouldn't have his records. The man bleeds. He's hard to listen to. They say he was the first angry Black man and it comes out in his music. I think I always played that way and people do find it a bit uncomfortable. I dislike a lot of the connotations of jazz, which is why I got out of it. The way they prefer Oscar Peterson.

Ron had thus already defined himself as a loner. As the purveyor of a more meaningful emotional music than other Bristol jazz players. However, his complete identification with Charlie Parker worked against him in many ways. By the time Ron started copying Parker in the late 50s he had already been dead for several years (he died in 1956, aged 36), and the music was already 15 or 20 years old. After two years of copying Parker, Ron had bought all the records that were available and had to move on to players such as Sonny Rollins and Thelonious Monk.

But it wasn't quite the same. In Ron's eyes they didn't measure up to the genius and intense emotion of Parker. Even less was he able to accept the innovations of 1960s jazz made by saxophonists Ornette Coleman, John Coltrane and Albert Ayler. As far as Ron was concerned Charlie Parker had said all there was to say on saxophone.

So by the mid-60s Ron had got himself into the peculiar situation of casting himself as a rebel by playing a music which was twenty years old in a community where most musicians were playing music that was forty or fifty years old. By the standards of the international development of jazz for a man in his early twenties to be playing like Charlie Parker in the early 60s was a conservative classicism. But English jazz was yet to find a natural historical development within it and thus Ron became, in a way, a victim of England's domination by American culture. He found himself unable to develop in terms of the culture with which he identified. (Compare this to Fred Anderson, who had an equal love and respect for Charlie Parker, but was able to develop his own music from this).

The way out of this impasse came in the middle 1960s when English popular music stopped being so dominated by American models and gradually developed forms that were consciously artistic in their intentions as well as entertaining. The early model for this was of course the Beatles, but there were many other musicians from both sides of the Atlantic who opened up new possibilities for rock music (as this sort of pop music became known). On the part of jazz musicians there was a general awakening as to the possibilities of a music based around the rhythms of rock music, which had become immensely more subtle, and around the song form, which now threw off many of the formal conventions it had been stuck with since the 1930s.

In 1967, with some friends from Bristol, Ron formed the rock group 'East of Eden'.

> We got together and said "look we're going to play this new fangled music". And it took us a year of sending off tapes and doing gigs around Bristol to finally get in. Do some London gigs and a European tour and get a record contract and all that crap.

The group soon became relatively successful. They played concert tours of Europe, made several albums and Ron himself was voted number one "miscellaneous instrument" in a readers' poll organised by the Melody Maker. This was an exciting time for Ron as it was for popular culture as a whole.

> There was vitality, a sense of energy, and a chance to make what we did accessible to a wider audience. That was how I formed East of Eden. It was a hybrid of musical styles - like a collage, if you like. Fusion, jazz-rock were terms which were coined later for that kind of thing, but we also had elements of theatre, performance, free jazz, classical music, a sort of cod Indian etc. I got a kind of frisson in combining different styles together.

Judging by the two albums the band made the collage technique they used for combining all these different elements was handled well and the music has a feeling of open-ness; naive perhaps but expressing a genuine desire to broaden the limits of commercial music. You could hear Ron's jazz roots clearly, but he was building on them, writing and singing songs which were part of the contemporary youth culture of that period rather than looking back to previous periods.

For a while things looked very good and Ron thought it would go on that way but eventually the contradictions of the commercial music scene began to pull at him. For a start he had a wife and young children in Bristol which made it difficult for him to be on the road all the time. He became more and more aware of the exploitation in the music scene and it became clear to him that the record companies had been going through the motions of experimenting with different sorts of

music because of commercial uncertainties rather than for any creative reasons. So as popular taste became easier to predict again in the early 70s most of the 'experimental' or 'progressive' bands were dropped by their record companies. Ron also began to be disillusioned with the actual music of East of Eden.

> I think we thought it was really creative at the time, but I don't think it was really. happening as much as we thought it was actually. That may have been as illusion as well. What was passed off as creative wasn't really being creative. It was a bit of a charade really. It was thought about in too much of a commercial way really, so that destroyed it...
>
> Eventually I became disillusioned by the commercial music industry, it's basically a rip-off scene. I came off the road and spent more time with my family, did some painting etc. I worked as a grass cutter, which was a gas. A very different way of life.

What had seemed like a way out of an artistic trap thus turned out to bring Ron back full circle to where he started. A disillusioned artist offering his art to a disinterested society.

His next move was to split his music in two. First he formed his own band called Chiconga, which played a funky sort of rhythm and blues, jazz-rock music: "a sort of Grover Washington (I found out later) approach spearheaded by strong saxophone lines. We had three percussion players, congas etc". This band soon built up a steady following locally and established itself at a late night bar in the centre of Bristol (The Crown) where they played every Friday night. The music couldn't really be called commercial because there was not that much money to be made. Maybe £20 each for a gig at the most, and generally only one gig a week. Also it related to a particular audience in a way that purely commercial music doesn't. Ron became an expert at judging just how far he could go with the Crown audience, the set up being that most of them were into the music but were also there to drink, meet their friends and

generally have a good time.

> If the punters heard Ornette Coleman or Albert Ayler they wouldn't go near it, but I'm doing it just for a few bars and they're accepting it. It's surprising what can go in.
>
> But I'm beginning to think it's a false thing to attempt because even though they like it they don't really understand it which is very frustrating. Most of what I do goes completely over their heads.

Although enjoying the music of Chiconga Ron found that it didn't really satisfy all his musical desires so it was then that he decided to investigate the world of free improvisation. He joined BMC in 1977 and gradually began involving himself in workshop sessions and playing at concerts (mainly as a soloist). This is the other half of the split that I referred to.

His approach to being a member of BMC was very different from all the other members. For a start it was unusual for someone to concentrate so much on solo playing. As I mentioned elsewhere, most improvisors consider the collective aspect of the music very important, but for Ron free improvisation was primarily a way of developing his relationship with his instrument, the saxophone and with its history.

> In my own experience I enjoy listening to soloists a lot in improvised music because I can listen to their developments, whereas when I listen to a group I am more aware of the relationships. But at the moment I'm more interested in the solo aspect of it.

Significantly, when Ron came to write about improvised music after a year of being involved in it he chose to compare it to the highly individual activity of painting.

> The best English improvisors I have heard achieve many of the objectives in exploration

> of sound that the Action Painters were aiming for two decades ago. Saxophonists are no longer restricted by the now seemingly narrow range of notes suggested by the saxophone fingering manual. Although using the same tone holes and mouthpieces as conventional contemporary players the range of new sounds which many of the new players are achieving is truly astonishing.
>
> Musics no.18, p.xi.

Painting and the saxophone - Ron's two obsessions. But being a Charlie Parker disciple, Ron once again found himself without a real starting point for moving into the sound exploration which he wanted. Whereas, say, Evan Parker's move into free improvisation came as a logical development from his interest in Eric Dolphy and John Coltrane, Ron's only way to get there from a bebop based style was to throw it all away and start more or less from scratch. His first few concerts of free improvisation were tortured affairs. It seemed vital to him to obliterate any traces of his former style, to get it completely out of his system, and at this stage it didn't leave him much to work with. A few disjointed squeaks, a grunt or growl here and there, a fast fluttering of the fingers over the keys, but overall an extremely spartan range of expressive sounds.

One could understand it by watching him. He frowned. He was struggling, trying to drag something out from the depths of his emotions. His eyes were tight shut. He crouched down low to play, or faced the wall. As if somehow the music would finally find a way out if he changed his position. Creep up from underneath and surprise the audience.... But still these squeaks and grunts, no development, no apparent intent. The man bleeds. This is Ron bleeding. Bleeding expressed in this case through the inability to let it out. The love affair with the saxophone. Caress it. Hold it tight. Engulf it. Do everything to it, in fact, but don't let it go. Blast

lungs full of air through it, suck it, lick it. Turn it upside down, take it apart. Put your hands on it the wrong way round. Surely something more must come out? ... not just the bleeding.

What to do then? How to express this great depth of emotion which he had found in bebop and Charlie Parker, and which had now become so stylized 35 years after its moment as to become meaningless? The theory of free improvisation was there in Ron's own words:

> Free music cannot be faked. Those who are fakers are exposed. This explains the form exactly... A very exciting time, one day the audience will hear what the musician is playing for him. ("How could we ever have restricted ourselves to barlines, key signature, etc.")
>
> This music has given freedom back to society, and is the only antidote to the corruption and debasement of modern life.
>
> ibid.

But the actual practice was less easily attainable. By grasping this newly perceived freedom, Ron simply lost too much.

His next step, after about 18 months of free improvising, was to begin to contextualise his inability to let his emotions flow out in this form. He began to bring the rest of his life into his performances. He is a very relaxed and natural talker and this now played an important role. He would talk about anything to the audience. About music, improvising, politics, society. Often self-deprecatingly about Chiconga - "We have two conga players. It gives the punters the superficial impression that there's something happening". About art - in one concert he had a dialogue with a member of the audience about whether Salvador Dali was just in it for

the money or not. And then finally, inevitably, about Charlie Parker. Soon the talk expanded to take in slides and tapes too. Charlie Parker aged three. Charlie Parker on stage. Charlie Parker lying in his coffin even! Tapes of Parker's music and then Parker being interviewed on a small town radio station complete with giggling girlfriend in the background. But it wasn't just Parker, Ron started showing slides of his own paintings too. Watercolours from the south of France, Cubist pictures of women. Then more tapes too. Chiconga, traffic noise, anything.

Gradually a collage was built up that filled a whole evening and took the attention away from this bleeding, sidestepped the creative problem. And yet the bleeding was still expressed in the juxtaposition of the elements. In contrast to the musical collage of 'East of Eden' which was skilfully handled, in Ron's free improvisation the elements were put together with a sort of cavalier sloppiness. An echo unit hummed louder than the signal it produced. Slides were upside down or back to front: "It doesn't matter - it looks better like that". Always the prepared media, the tapes and slides, would dominate in terms of time. Ron would play his sax for only a few seconds at a time. He seemed to be allowing more of his old style into it now, but would always stop abruptly and do something else. Either put a tape on, or press a few switches on his echo unit. Anything to divert the attention.

This is how it stands at the moment then. We still get only glimpses of what's there and there seems little hope of it coming out. At the heart of it is the fact that Ron sees deep contradictions in both sides of his split - the 'commercial' and the 'creative'.

Firstly, he is committed to the idea of doing something for the audience in an 'ordinary' way, and not just for himself.

> I provide a service, in this case playing music, and only ask to be paid a decent, living wage for it. Just like the TV engineer and the road sweeper are paid.
>
> Playing in a bar! It can be what you make it. Some can be O.K. First of all you must accept most of the people are there just to enjoy a drink or whatever. You're really sort of musical wallpaper. But it's surprising what you can put into the music and still fulfill the terms of employment. Most people whilst enjoying the music don't really appreciate what I'm doing. But you'd be surprised. People often come up afterwards wanting to shake my hand, it's really quite touching. They can never understand why we're not famous. I like the idea of playing to a wide audience and building into the music something for all members of the audience - those who want to dance - those who like to listen. It's all in there.
>
> To me it's a form of applied art, and at its best it can equal "high art". It's a form of "popular art" - hooks into mass culture. You set out to meet some of the aspirations of the audience and also your own aspirations. The two of you can meet halfway. It can be satisfying. You are not totally self orientated or "inner directed" but are also "Other directed".

However, the music only works to the extent that Ron believes in it, and again, while he has the theory at his fingertips about the mutual aspirations of musician and audience, in practice he is often up there on the stand thinking to himself that he's wasting his time and that he's playing a load of rubbish. And yet he is aware of the contradiction of this too, and although he often talks in terms of categories of music, in another sense he places a higher value on the individual's response to a particular category.

> I like to work within limitations. You can push against them, go outside, make sly jokes and play around with the whole situation. This kind of music could be very much more popular if it was allowed

> to be. I'll admit it's basically a stereotype but so is an awful lot of so-called improvised music, which is presented as being on a higher plane. It isn't necessarily. I think there is only good and bad music, whatever the style.
>
> Improvised music is sometimes a very po-faced affair and the musicians play very safe, just as much as the musicians they affect to despise. The good musician will always take risks. Nevertheless, improvised music offers the opportunity to make a totally personal statement, which can be unbearably intense and in a situation stripped of all associations with conventional musico-economic conditions. It is potentially very exciting and you can go as far as you are willing to risk yourself.
>
> In a bar in the playing situation, you effectively seal the audience off in a part of your mind and concentrate on the music. In improvised music it can be necessary to seal the audience off, not just for reasons of concentration. I don't go along with some discernible attitudes of intellectual audiences. There is sometimes a sense of conceit which I don't go for, a sense of being patrons. In fact there is an awful tendency to "appropriate" the performer. They are unable or unwilling to "experience" the reality of what he is doing or giving, but can only perceive it within a narrow view, and seek to relate it to their own narrow and limited criteria. The concert becomes an excuse for the audience to indulge in a self-indulgent ego-trip, a sterile unimaginative intellectual exercise.

Thus it is clear that Ron has deep misgivings about both the musical scenes he is involved in, based on what he sees as the inability of the two audiences, in their very different ways, to really understand his music. The bar audience because the music "goes over their heads" and the art audience because they "patronise" but don't "experience". This brings us back to my original description of Ron as being a loner in a hostile society.

Somehow, this self-definition of Ron's has become so deeply ingrained as an individual way of responding to society that he has found it difficult to work collectively in an organisation such as the BMC. Again it is a question of a contradiction between the theory and the practice.

WM: Your past has always had something of the rebel or the loner in it, hasn't it? How do you see that fitting in with the Co-op?

Ron Caines: Well, I think the Co-op is also a loner in society, something they don't really want. An aberration, an irritant, so I fit in perfectly well, that's where I should always have been. If there'd been a Co-op around twenty years ago, I'd have joined. But I see the Co-op mainly for what it stands for in the future. Society's got to change and then the Co-op would just be another part of society.

WM: But do you think if that happened, you'd have changed again and not want to be part of that?

RC: Yeah, quite possibly!

In practice, however, Ron has been on the edge of the Co-op, tending to be very active for short periods and then disappearing for a few months. His approach to the Co-op has been similar to his individualistic approach to music. It is not so much the co-operativeness that seems to interest him, but more the stance towards society, and thus at Co-op meetings he has often argued for more individual initiative and responsibility over particular projects rather than continuous mutual aid.

I have presented Ron Caines as a somewhat paradoxical figure in the context of the Bristol music scene, but in fact he represents in an extreme way the contrary forces working on a wide scale. The force to do something in relation to a local community. The force to make an intensely personal and creative music. The force to be acclaimed by the public.

The force to be sincere to himself. The force to relate to the strength of American culture. The force to liberate himself from these influences. The force to devote himself to music. The force to look after his family... And so it goes on. His particular problem seems to be that he is totally unable to resolve these forces into a coherent way of acting in the world. He is pulled one way then the other. Any moment in his artistic life will represent a temporary fixing of these forces, an expression of Ron's ongoing attempt to deal with them. As I have indicated already, the forces often weaken his statements rather than reinforce them. So, while he claims that his semi-commercial music in Chiconga could be much more popular if people had the chance to hear it, he doesn't actually give it that extra push to get more gigs or recording deals with it. The extra overheads in terms of transport, equipment, agents' fees, etc. would be so large, he argues, it would be unlikely to prove economically beneficial in the long run. Similarly, while he endorses free improvisation as being a liberation for the musician, he doesn't give his own playing that extra push to exploit this liberation.

Then there is the American influence too. His feeling for the superiority of American culture in general - James Dean, Marlon Brando, Charlie Parker - is used as a way of defining himself in relation to British culture, but he has never seen the thing through by visiting the States and getting to the heart of the culture. Rather he has played the role of the responsible family man, staying with his family in Bristol and making do with the more mediated versions of American culture that are available here.

Everything is unresolved.

The possible frustration of this situation is allayed by the fact that he always has something to do. If the contradictions of music get too much for him, he can turn to painting, or indeed doing administrative work either for the Co-op or the Artists Union and so on. One is tempted to the conclusion

that the only way he can hold all these forces in balance is by not letting any area of his activity get too big or important. It must all stay at a level where he feels he can control his own identity and not get placed into one of the received categories that he perceives society as using to limit people. He doesn't want to be a 'creative musician' or a 'popular musician' or an 'artist'. Neither does he want to be a combination of these things. The irony of the situation is that his acute perception of the way categories are used in society has served to make as strict a limitation on his activity as the categories themselves would if he took a different line.

Yet Ron must still be understood as a victim. His traps are not of his own making, they represent social forces that are very real and in this sense, if one is fully aware of his background, Ron's music is very expressive. It is simply that he has been unable to resolve these forces for longer than a moment, and as a result has suffered from them. At the same time probably no other member of the BMC has even ventured to try to resolve the forces on the level that Ron has. Most of them have concentrated their energies in much smaller areas. Thus the cultural moment that we can see through Ron and his music is as broad and as acutely relevant as any that one could imagine being expressed through the life of one person.

iii) Bob Helson

In 1975, in an unpublished article, I wrote about Bob Helson as being one of "several players who obviously do have the musical ability to succeed on the London scene but who have, for one reason or another, deliberately decided not to go". He is now 30 years old and has been an accomplished percussionist for over 10 of them and thus his present situation must be understood as one of conscious choice. This choice has taken him further and further away from the market place to his present position where he considers it irrelevant whether his music is sellable or not. Also his tastes have followed the typical line described earlier of starting from commercially successful British music, tracing back through its American influences to a music very far removed from his original interests. In Bob's case the link was not through different singers singing the same song (as I described for Evan Parker's progression from Lonnie Donegan to Leadbelly) but through drumming and drummers.

His first interest in music was the pop group The Shadows, who in 1960 were the only instrumental group who were really popular on a national scale. It was through watching and listening to their drummer, Tony Meehan, that Bob was inspired to take up the drums.

> I think I was probably influenced by their star quality! I then got the idea that jazz drummers were supposed to be the best drummers, so I started listening to jazz. Mainly big bands like Basie, Ellington, Woody Herman, who were touring fairly regularly at that time.

This step was relatively easy to take. Although the bands Bob referred to were obviously not as available as the Shadows and were rather a specialist interest, they were still firmly situated in the commercial music market place. Records by them were easily available and occasionally one of them, Basie, Ellington, Buddy Rich, would pass through Bristol and

play a concert at the Colston Hall. Also, there was a whole jazz subculture that surrounded this music and it was easy to pick up on this from the jazz magazines and journals.

The move towards an interest in avant-garde jazz was more difficult, because not only were the records more difficult to get hold of, but also the music was largely rejected by this jazz subculture. In fact Bob got hold of his first John Coltrane records almost by accident from a specialist dealer in Cornwall, while he was on holiday there. As for hearing the music live, this was simply out of the question in Bristol since the small amount of interest there was couldn't support trans-Atlantic travel and provide a profit for the promoter on top of that. However, the music was much talked about and it was this that prompted Bob to take an interest in it.

> The general climate was very anti-avant-garde. I heard Ornette Coleman and thought "What the hell's going on?" Then I bought John Coltrane's record "Live at the Village Vanguard" and didn't like it. I thought because he seemed to be able to do anything it must be to do with the expanded harmony or something, but I couldn't make it out.

The step to enjoying avant-garde jazz, then, was an educational one. Bob had to actually <u>learn</u> how to listen to it. It was necessary for him to sidestep the theoretical explanations ("expanded harmony") which fell far short of the music itself and allow himself to listen to the music emotionally. It soon became clear to him that the music of Ornette Coleman and John Coltrane wasn't an intellectual music, wasn't a <u>theoretical</u> extension of older styles of jazz, but was a continuation and intensification of the <u>sensuality</u> of jazz. Sound and rhythm. As Bob began to realise this he also began to develop an awareness of his own attitude to playing and realised that it was important to him to actually be a <u>creator</u> of music in the fullest sense and not just a consumer or re-creator. He put it simply:

> I wanted to make sure I knew how to do the things they did, but I realised by then I had to play my own style.

It is clear then, that for Bob and many others, the commodity form in which the new jazz was presented was not sufficient in itself to produce an understanding. Without the music's full creative context an imaginative leap was required from the listener to enjoy it. Bob managed this (many others didn't) and used it as a conceptual base for developing his own music. However, I think it is important to note that the move wasn't away from American-ness or from Black culture (Bob hardly saw it in these terms) but away from a music whose meaning is defined by the market place, and from imposed values.

By this time (around 1970) Bob was beginning to discover other people in Bristol who were interested in a similar sort of music and he began getting various gigs, mainly in pubs playing a variety of music including modern jazz, early jazz-rock and occasional workshop sessions of free improvisation. At the same time as becoming more and more involved in free improvisation Bob began to develop an interest in the electronic music of Stockhausen which shared the explorative nature of improvisation. but had very different social relationships involved in its production. It was composed music and thus relied on having a boss and an extensive system of hierarchical and economic arrangements before it could be produced. In a way this is a surprising interest for Bob to have because in improvisation he is very much attached to the idea of leaderless group music, where all the individuals contribute equally. Bob feels that improvisation at its best should have a natural organic feeling to it which transcends the consciousness of the individuals producing the music.

He is unable to explain his interest in Stockhausen's music and accepts it as being part of his own character.

> I was thinking about mysticism the other day. There's a lot of it about.

WM: You mean you'd be tempted to give some sort of mystical explanation to music?

BH: I'd be tempted to give some sort of mystical explanation to the world! I don't know really - that's what I mean by mysticism, I don't know.

Thus Bob is frequently puzzled by the world. But if you push him a little further you can begin to understand how his interests link up. Probably part of the explanation for Bob's interest in Stockhausen lies in the fact that it dates back to before the time when he really worked out his ideas about collective creation.

> It was mainly the actual sound of it that interested me, but reading the literature has helped me focus on it - once you get past the guy's ego! It doesn't actually bother me that the social set up is nothing like improvisation, since I hear it mainly in terms of sound.

In the last few years Bob has been working on a tape music piece using both electronically syhthesized sound and pre-recorded natural sounds and doing this has helped him become clearer in his mind about what is important about improvisation.

> One important thing is the spontaneity which I've noticed particularly since I've been doing the tape pieces where obviously you don't have it. Just the feeling of being able to do what you want to do immediately without any pissing around.

Tape-making and improvisation are both radical methods of making music since they both get rid of the distinction between creator and interpreter, but the contrast between them in terms of activity is so extreme that it is worth pausing a while to examine the different attitudes they represent for Bob.

On the one hand, as an improvisor, Bob plays his percussion instruments. At a concert he arranges them in a set pattern all around him so he has immediate access to any sort of sound he wants to make. He has a high level of technical expertise as well as much experience of different collective situations, so his music is always based very much on a fast and skillful response to the situation. The creation is instantaneous and passing. As soon as he's done it, it's gone. Because of this and because of its collective nature, the music can never be completely defined. There always remains an openness about what it was or what it wasn't.

On the other hand, making tape music is essentially a solitary activity. A long, often laborious process of recording sounds, transforming them electronically, and splicing bits of tape together. There is no pressure to finish a piece (except external ones) so if it doesn't sound quite right, you just go on changing and developing it until it does. Thus rather than representing a moment with past experiences and techniques crammed into it, a tape piece represents an evolving technique, one that can be developed to the level required by the concept of the piece. But once finished it is fixed and defined, it is there to be scrutinised and seen for what it is. It is in fact a tape composition. Bob finds these two activities complementary, but it is outside the scope of this thesis to look any deeper at tape music. I will just note that some of the <u>sounds</u> to be heard in Bob's percussion improvising are reminiscent of some that Stockhausen uses. But this is a trivial relationship when compared to the other factors that shape Bob's music.

Absolutely fundamental to Bob's concept of improvisation is his idea of collectivity. His music starts from the collective rather than the self. Thus he will normally start playing very tentatively, allowing himself to pick up the tiniest

indications about the direction in which the music will move. Furthermore, he really requires a similar attitude to be taken by other members of the group. If anyone is starting from an individual approach it causes an uneasiness in the music as I described in Bob's concert with Leo Smith (page 163). For from one point of view Leo could have been described as 'pushy' or 'overbearing', and from another point of view Bob could have been described as 'weak' or 'ineffectual'. Thus my last sentence: "A superficial listening might have considered Bob to be merely scratching the surface".

One could say that Bob's point of departure is that the collective is there already before you start playing and must be carefully discovered by the musicians, whereas Leo's position is more that the collective must be created by the fusion of very strong individuals. In this particular case, the combining of these two approaches made a fascinating piece of music because both men had a strong respect for each other, but in the long term it would be a difficult relationship to sustain.

In the article from which I took the description I suggested that the two approaches were consistent with the two men's life histories which, as the reader will recall, I summarised as follows:

> LEO SMITH: African-American. Born in Leland, Mississippi in 1941. Travelled with blues band and then spent 5 years in the US Army in the USA and Europe. Spent the late 60's in Chicago as part of the Black Musicans' collective, the AACM. Went to live in Paris to spread the music and find audiences. Two residences in Europe and then settled in West Haven, Connecticut. Has published his own books and records. His life has been one of constant choice and positive action. He settled in West Haven because "the metropolis is not necessary for this music".
>
> BOB HELSON: Working class, English. Born in Bristol in 1949 and has lived there all his life. After leaving school he worked as a photographer's assistant, then a claimant, then a technician in a school, all the time pursuing

> music as a part-time activity. He has been involved with the Bristol Musicians' Co-op since 1975 when it started, and has published one record with his regular group. Until recently, when he gave up his day job he had made no major decisions because it was part of his philosophy that he thought he shouldn't have to make decisions. His anti-metropolitan beliefs prevent him from going to London.
>
> So their cultural situations are very different. As a Black American, one assumes that Leo has been surrounded by other people's definitions of himself and so to survive, it has been imperative for him to stand up and say "I AM NOT THAT. I AM THIS". But Bob has had no direct experience of racial or class struggle; his experience of the world has been of bureaucracy, stupidity, ignorance, but not deliberate and malicious hostility. No-one has said to him "YOU ARE THAT" and so he has had no need to respond in that way.

Thus I implied that there was no particular <u>need</u> for Bob to make a strong statement of personal identity, since he was confident that this would emerge through the collective anyway.

However, in trying to portray a contrast between the two men, it may be that I implied too much passivity in Bob's position. It seems from subsequent conversations I have had with him that he feels he often has been confronted with people saying 'YOU ARE THAT' but has taken an <u>active</u> decision not to be affected by it. To react strongly against the definition would in any case change him into something he didn't want to be.

Thus his position is better characterised by a term such as 'stubborn persistence' rather than 'passivity', since often his failure to act has been motivated by a desire not to be diverted by superficial ways of trying to improve his situation. So, why move to London when he can make good music in Bristol? Why make a strong statement of self in the music when a subtle collective statement better suits his purposes?

This stubborn persistence can be seen too in his decision to give up his day job two years ago and devote himself full-time to music. One might think that giving up his day job indicated that Bob was beginning to be more successful as a musician and that he could see the chance of earning his living through music; also that it might prompt a more commercial attitude towards music on his part. But neither of these is true. Giving up his job was actually a recognition of the uncommercial nature of his music. It was purely for the purpose of giving himself more time for the music and getting deeper into it, thus making it more personally satisfying. There was no point in continuing his job. Any stop-gap function it might have once had had gone. Since he had by now lost any illusions he might have had about the chances of really earning his living through music it made sense for him to stop thinking in economic terms at all and simply devote all his time to his music, his overriding interest.

The extra time he now has he has devoted both to his own music, particularly his tape pieces, and also to the Co-op. He does much of the routine work for the Co-op such as putting up posters, addressing envelopes and so on, and also runs the weekly improvisation workshops. Since he himself is not a 'natural' organiser, he sees the Co-op as being an important way of providing some continuity to his activity.

> It gives musical security. Although I still don't play as much as I'd like to, I always know I'll be playing again fairly soon instead of wondering about it and getting depressed. I remember I used to have fairly long periods when I wouldn't play at all just because any scene that was going would suddenly collapse and there'd be no continuity to keep things going. I'd wonder if I'd ever play again.

It is the workshop sessions, above all, that express this continuity, since even if musicians have no gigs and nowhere to arrange a session with friends, they can at least go to the workshop. This is also the way into the Co-op for new members

and thus serves a crucial function for long term continuity.

For Bob too it is important to him that he feels part of a community of sympathetic people in the Co-op rather than a deviant individual in the wider disinterested community. The Co-op has also helped enormously in enlarging the scope of this community, its sound structure making it much easier for musicians to visit from other parts of England and from outside England.

The feeling of being part of a community gives added confidence to the musicians' relationships with the non-improvising community. So although Bob often plays his music to very small audiences, sometimes as few as 10 people, this doesn't particularly depress him. One point is that the presence of any audience at all gives the music a special concentrated flavour. Bob finds it psychologically much more stimulating to play to people than not and believes he is more alert and responsive when there is an audience there. So in terms of emotional satisfaction the fact that there is an audience there at all far surpasses the fact that it is a very small one. But more importantly Bob believes sincerely in the importance of improvised music in our society, and this gives him a desire to play to bigger audiences.

> I think it's very important that people should be aware that it's going on, even if they end up not particularly liking it. Particularly from the point of view of the way it's organised as a very co-operative thing. Just the fact that there is this way of making music that exists and people should know about it. But beyond that I also think that music can change people and that is very important. So there definitely is a sense of communication in what I do. I feel there's something there that I want to get across to people.

Because of this belief, Bob still feels frustrated that he is not able to play more concerts, in spite of the fact that he now devotes practically all of his time to music.

> I see it as a matter of getting the right balance between doing gigs and other musical activity. I see gigs as being the fundamental thing on which all the other things are based and if I was doing say 3 a week on average I would consider that a better balance. And it would also give me more financial security - but that's pretty optimistic at the moment.

The lack of gigs is caused mainly by the fact that free improvisation remains very much a minority interest for audiences. Even some of the members of the MC in London who now have international reputations still find it hard to get by. Bob's regular group Both Hands Free doesn't have this sort of reputation but it does put a considerable amount of work into hustling for gigs, and yet it rarely plays many more than a dozen in a year. Bob is particularly frustrated by this since he feels this group comes nearest to expressing his ideas in music.

The continual lack of gigs has, of course, made financial problems for Bob. For the first eighteen months after giving up his job, he just managed to scrape by, living mainly on social security and occasional concert fees. He lives as frugally as anyone I know. He still lives with his parents and practically never spends any money other than on food and on running his van (which is essential for transporting his equipment). After eighteen months his social security money was stopped on the false grounds that he wasn't really seeking employment, and he was forced firstly to start playing two nights a week in a bar with a rock band ('Chiconga' - see the Ron Caines section) and secondly to get a part-time job as a cleaner.

The rock band he dislikes, not because it is rock, but because he feels it is playing totally to a formula copied from records, and he thus finds no room for creativity. The cleaning he puts up with.

Bob's future is unclear. It is very much a transitional period for him. There are some indications that he is being slowly pushed into a more active approach to his life. This shows up partly in the way his music is changing.

> I've been trying to become more self-sufficient as a player. Less dependent on whatever else was going on. Partly through reading that article you wrote about me and Leo Smith I realised that I don't actually have a clear idea of my own identity. Doing the solo cassette was a deliberate step to try and find that out - what I am.

As well as making and publishing a solo cassette, Bob has also played several solo concerts recently which have been most enjoyable and illuminating.

More and more in Bob's playing one is aware of the sensuousness of the sound. His jazz drumming always had that quality. Compared to other drummers he'd play much more drums and less cymbals. Always he was trying to get more expression in, looking for any formulas or structural weak points and covering them up with musical creativity. And now this quality is coming into his free improvisation too. At one time it seemed as though his playing was going towards a sort of minimalism based on exploiting tiny details of sound, but now he is expanding outwards from the detail. He works at a particular rhythm or sound or body movement but, instead of simply concentrating on that, he gradually introduces sounds made on adjacent parts of his kit, and exploits fully all the different ways of using his arms and legs. Often he will start from a very precisely played motif played with sticks on a drum and at the same time as bringing in sounds such as saucepans or woodblocks he will manipulate the basic sound of the drum by putting his foot on it. Sometimes he will also deliberately vary the precision of the sound by relaxing his wrists and moving his whole arms around the kit, or maybe by swapping the drumsticks for branches of twigs off a tree. Thus a great

richness comes into the music from the number of different variables in the sound and the different physical ways of controlling these variables. There is an intimate, irreducible connection between the actual sound and the way it is made, which is only possible to attain with this degree of refinement in improvised music.[1] In an analogous way to group improvisations, Bob's solos often progress in a continuous dialectic between his previous intentions and the physical sound that comes out. He has a very delicate touch on the drums and is thus often able to exploit a small accidental sound and divert the course of the improvisation to focus attention on it.

His solos, then, depend very much on listening, both for himself and for the audience. You can't just sit back and say "Oh yes, he's doing that" because then you'll miss it. The information comes in the detail and the very organic way in which it relates to the overall form.

Thus Bob's approach to playing is based on his experience in collective improvisation even when he is playing solos. I would assume that Bob will bring back his solo experience into his group playing too and also that his lifestyle and philosophy will gradually evolve. Even as I write, Bob's attitudes are changing, especially as he finds himself forced more and more to respond to economic pressures and I don't feel able to predict what Bob's position will be in a year's time. However,

1. John Blacking argues that the physical action of playing is part of the meaning of some straight music too. "That is, if you find out by feeling for it how Debussy might have held his hands and body when he played the piano, you might get a better feeling for his music. You might find that you could play the music with feeling without having to be immensely 'deep'" (How Musical Is Man? p.111). However, this one example doesn't alter the fact that most straight music is composed 'in the head'.

I hope I have made it clear that in spite of Bob's worries, his playing does have a strong identity of its own and that his musical problem (if there is one) is to transform this identity rather than construct an identity out of nothing. His musical identity, probably more than anyone else's, is very tied up with the Co-operative though, and thus his future is too.

iv) Ian Menter

In contrast to the frustration of Caines and Helson, Ian Menter has arrived at a way of life that is much more satisfactory in general. If Bob Helson represents an unexpected viewpoint of professionalism, Ian Menter takes a radical attitude to the whole question of what a musician ought to be doing. However, many of his views remain speculative since he has a full-time job as a teacher in a primary school and doesn't find time to put all his ideas into practice. Ironically perhaps, in the only period when he would have had time to do this, a six month period in 1971 when he worked at being a professional musician in the normal sense, he hadn't yet developed these ideas. It has been largely through working outside music that he has come to see it in the way he does.

Ian has been the main organiser in the Co-op since about two years after it started and more than any other member has provided a continuity and reliability to the administrative structure. In terms of time he spends most on his teaching job and connected things such as the NUT, second most on administrative jobs for the Co-op and third most on actually playing music. I asked him what effect he thought this had on his music.

> The practical way is being committed to a full-time job it restricts the amount of time I can actually give to music, but on the other hand the security of a regular income means that I can be more relaxed about my music-making. I don't have to worry about whether it's making me money or not.
>
> I think the fact that I can't give a lot of time to it has determined in some way the kind of music that I'm involved in. So I don't have time to practise a lot so the music can't be based on a high level of technique nor can it be based on working in a very regular group, on carefully nurtured relationships like say Both Hands Free - the kind of music is very much based on the group identity and which is living

> all the time. In the duo with Bob (Helson) we have quite a high degree of knowledge of each other's music - but it's not an ongoing thing in the way that Both Hands Free is.

Already apparent is a clear concept of music as a part-time activity - no attempt at a 'quasi-professionalism' often found in part-time musicians or indeed the feelings of frustration and inferiority which are also common. This is apparent in the sound of Ian's music. While being no technical virtuoso, he has a sound basic technique on the alto sax and, since he uses his abilities well, there is no feeling of inadequacy in listening to his music. Rather one feels he has a firm grasp of what he wants to do.

In a similar way to Bob a key concept in Ian's music is sensuousness. He takes great pleasure in the actual physical feeling of blowing air through a saxophone and making a noise. Again this has developed from playing in jazz bands. He used to play in several jazz, free jazz and jazz rock bands such as Magma, Bullit and Ferment and began producing an exceptional strong guttural sound, most unusual for an alto which is often the sweetest sounding of the saxes. Once his playing was described as a combination of Charlie Parker and Earl Bostic. This was an apt comparison because he would take great pleasure in exploiting his strong sound through playing harmonically and rhythmically crude ideas which would communicate through the very richness of their sound, and this would often be developed into harmonically and rhythmically complex free improvisation within the context of the same solo. The unifying factor being the flow of air through the instrument, producing this very distinctive sound.

He retains all this in his free improvising and adds different things for different performances, being keen always to keep the music fresh. On some occasions he has built structures to hang instruments on for both hitting and blowing. Sometimes

he talks about what he is doing while he does it, representing a desire to demystify the music. Again the emphasis is on the activity rather than a contrived performance. At one gig he introduced all the members of the audience to each other in the way that the band are usually introduced.

In comparison to the professional musicians of the MC, there is less drive to communicate everything with the audience. Less urgency to get all that is inside outside. Overall this makes the music less intense, even though there are often some very intense passages in it. But the point is that it is a very honest expression of the social situation that produces it and communicates the breadth of Ian's commitments in a way that couldn't be done by taking a quasi-professional approach. Thus it acquires an intensity of a different sort.

> The most important thing about it is doing it. Right? After that it's enjoying it; after that it's the other people I'm playing with enjoying it; and after that it's the people who listen to it enjoying it.
>
> By doing it I mean creating spontaneously I suppose. Being ignorant before I play of what's actually going to happen. But it's also quite important to me that it remains as demystified as possible, as accessible as possible. So it's a sharing rather than an imposition on those listening to it. The actual presentation and context is very important to me.

It is largely this question of presentation and context, or the expectations of the listener in certain contexts that he feels distinguishes his approach from the typical professional musician's approach.

> The stereotype of the professional musician is somebody who is very skilled, talented, able, gifted and has goods to sell, and the better he or she is, the more money he or she will get. In terms again of the professional musicians giving or selling something to an audience. And the kind of professional

> musician I wouldn't mind seeing, or being in fact, is more of a 'music worker' who may be very able and clever on the instrument but whose job is not just to go and show off to an audience but is actually to share his or her abilities and to stir up creative musical activity in a community. Sharing and leading and working amongst people rather than at people or for people.

At the moment he doesn't see how he could do this without giving up his job as a teacher but suggested that for anyone who did want to there are avenues that are possible, like education authorities or community arts budgets.

The awareness that a music performance is related to a much broader culture has been particularly stimulated by working at a multi-ethnic school with many West Indian and Asian children.

> I think the fact that I have a very wide experience every day may have helped the music.
>
> The only other thing is teaching in a multi-ethnic school where you develop ideas about cultural pluralism and cultural domination, cultural freedom; which are political ideas which apply to music.

Although the Co-op exists in a multi-ethnic community it has certainly not achieved anything like the cultural fusion that American jazz has. For example it has no connections musical or social with Bristol's West Indian community. Thus political meaning can't be ascribed to the music in the sense of defining relationships between communities as it was for AACM music. Rather the political meaning is a specifically European one in that theoretical socialist ideas are practically implied within the music. To Ian, this aspect of the music is particularly important. But it is also problematical.

> One disappointment to me in the five years we've been going is that we attracted very little interest from politically active people on the left and I think I've

> developed the feeling that the music could be a sort of cultural focus for people on the left, but this just hasn't happened at the moment. I think a lot of left groups are probably aware of our existence - like Robert Hunter in that article [1] said that the most politically significant thing was the way we are organised, rather than being able to identify with the music at all. I think that was politically important because it seems there are two strands to it. The organisation is basically democratic and socialist, and the music that most of us play is basically libertarian, so through these two strands we've got a sort of socialist libertarian feel to the co-op as a whole. But I feel it's only very few people in the co-op that are able to really identify that or feel that so it may well not be true in fact, if one examines it more closely.

Of course the music can only be described as political in a very specialised sense of the word if the political message is buried so deep that even some of the musicians who are doing it don't recognise it. For left groups in general this has meant that the music is not political but merely another part of the bourgeois art avant-garde. This view was argued by Robert Hunter, in a review of a concert series by BMC. He defines improvised music as an attack on musical values, as anti-art:

> If improvised music is a revolt of form and style which posits itself as a radical alternative to mainstream forms, shunning critical involvement with these forms, then it is like a musical ultra-left condemned to impotence and limited sectarian controversies, bolstering its raison d'etre among a clique of self-congratulatory afficionados. If it is an assault on musical 'art' itself then it cancels itself out. No basis exists for the coming together of performers and

1. Robert Hunter, 'Improvised Music - Retreat of the Avant Garde?' in Unpopular Music.

> audience. To retain such formal distinctions, along with the absurdity of paid performers and a paying - for what? - audience, is an exercise in self-deluding negativity.
>
> ibid. p.38.

Thus a sophisticated political commentator can see no political content in the music at all because it fails to engage in a direct dialogue with dominant cultural modes. I have already shown, in the London chapter, how improvised music is specially suited to carrying a political or social message, but our culture is so dominated by verbal rationality that it has become radical even to suggest that a music which is almost totally non-verbal is capable of transmitting a political message, and most listeners to music are certainly not alert to the possibilities of receiving it. For Ian this shows two things:

> Accepting for the moment that there definitely is revolutionary content one must accept the fact that there are huge barriers against those aspects of it being recognised; cultural, ideological aspects to do with mass-media, media control and so on. But the other aspect of it is that we've got a lot of work to do in explaining the music. Not necessarily explaining it in words, but in demystifying it, trying to make it open and understandable.

Thus the importance of administration, organisation, writing articles and generally being open to any discussion about the music. This puts into perspective the fact that Ian spends more time on the secondary activities than the primary one of actually playing, for he believes that only in this way can the value of the music be preserved and developed.

> If there is going to be any long term significance to the Co-op, then it's essential that it's well organised in terms of being stable and well publicised. You're only going to alter things, develop things, improve things if people get to know what it's all about. We

have got certain ideas and messages which we wish to persuade other people to agree with, and I think you can only do that by being well publicised. By using a lot of words in fact... We wouldn't get anywhere just playing music.

That's if we want to get somewhere. Most of us do, but there may be others who are quite happy just playing and don't mind if they affect anybody else, either by taking money off them or by changing their ideas. For me, I'm particularly keen to change their ideas and I'm quite happy to take money off them.

v) 'Doing It'

Of the three musicians I have discussed, two can be described as being in a state of frustration, being basically unhappy with their personal situations, and I can see no way in which this can significantly change in the near future. In view of this it is pertinent to ask exactly what has the BMC achieved during its six year existence.

Putting the negative side first, I started off by observing that the normal expectation of a talented jazz musician in a provincial city is that he should move to London to develop musically and to earn more money. The musicians in the BMC haven't done this. They've stayed in Bristol. But it could be argued that BMC has provided just enough security and structure to make it feasible for them to stay, but not enough to actually stimulate them to develop artistically and give their music the extra push it needs to become really interesting for the public.

There were, after all, musicians in previous generations who had taken a similar stance - that is, for one reason or another never left their home town. And most of these, musicians in their forties and fifties, are now stuck playing in the same old pubs to audiences who only very occasionally take the trouble to listen to what's going on. Often, if the music is that little bit better, or if special thought and rehearsal have gone into it, the audience doesn't actually notice. This of course takes its toll on the musicians, who often deteriorate musically and gradually discard any aspirations apart from having a good blow and a night out. Some of them still play excellently, but the limits of their music are strictly proscribed by the pub environment, and they learn not to push the music in directions that will upset the drinkers or the landlord.

If it were slightly different, it could be called community

music, playing music at a very local level that people like and respond to. Indeed most of these musicians have a small loyal following who become familiar with their work over a period of years and are sensitive to changes and developments. However, it is not these people who determine the limits of the music, rather it is the casual drinking public who probably don't even know who they're listening to. Thus, in general, the function the music serves is a mechanical one rather than a specific one. (It is a long way from the scene I described at Teresa's in Chicago). Is it then possible that the musicians in BMC will be caught in a similar situation in, say, ten years time?

There is certainly a danger of this, particularly if audiences remain as small as they are at the moment. But there is one major difference and this is that the musicians don't have the same dependence on audiences as did the older musicians. The music, as Ian Menter pointed out, is essentially based on 'doing it', and at the same time a firm theoretical basis has been worked out for continuing 'doing it'. It isn't tied to 'doing it' in front of an audience so it is capable of moving in any direction that the musicians want it to. It already has moved into workshop and teaching situations and also environmental contexts, especially outside where the sounds produced by musicians simply become one more element in a pre-existing soundscape. In this case the frontal presentation to the audience is completely abandoned.

However, there is a danger in this too. Although it represents one way of developing and keeping creative ideas flowing, it also fails to make the very direct communication that musicians and audiences often require. For example, it certainly doesn't fulfill Bob Helson's requirements since, as I pointed out, he feels he has something very specific that he wants to give to an audience. Thus for him it still remains second best to be involved primarily in what he considers secondary activities (although he values them for their own sake).

A comparison can be made with flying kites. Making environmental music is a bit like climbing a hill and flying a kite from the top. Maybe someone will catch a glimpse of it from a long way off. And, yes, it does look nice up there dancing in the wind, and, yes, it is nice to think there are people doing it who are interested and committed to kite-flying. But surely music is meant to be more than this? Part-time music, but not a hobby I said earlier, and yet now I emphasise 'doing it' for its own sake irrespective of audience. I think the difference in the end comes down to the fact that involvement in the music itself is expressive and communicative in the various senses I have been into in this and the previous chapters. An indication of this is that the community of improvising musicians is steadily growing both in Bristol and other cities in England. The BMC now has over 50 members, and there are at least a dozen other musicians' co-ops around the country. Because of this there is a basis for continuing the music without an audience at least temporarily. Possibly it is a matter of time too. The virtuosic free improvisation practised by the London Musicians' Co-op members certainly does have a substantial audience now after 10 years and this might gradually extend to the other forms that I have been discussing.

Meanwhile the economic prospects remain bleak. It still remains impossible for musicians such as Helson and Caines to make a living from playing improvised music and it seems that to maintain a stable involvement in the music it is necessary to have some other money-making activity which complements rather than undermines one's music. Making improvised music one's whole life in Bristol is fraught with difficulties. Ian Menter's relative stability has been achieved only by sticking to the original proposition of <u>not</u> making the music one's whole life.

PART 4

CHAPTER 8: COMPARISONS AND REFLECTIONS

Bristol Musicians' Co-operative, the Musicians' Co-operative, the Jazz Composers' Guild, the Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians. Four collective responses to the problems posed by the desire to develop a contemporary form and practice for jazz and improvised music in the specific circumstances of the four cities.

I have been concerned throughout to show that people make their music at the same time as they make their lives, and that the meanings that are expressed by music are closely related to the way life is lived, on all levels from the individual to the societal. Cultural products should not be treated as autonomous, but as part of society. They only exist in specific circumstances of production and consumption (not always the same) and can only be fully understood in relation to these.

On what basis then is it legitimate to compare the four organisations and their musics? What is the nature of the relationship between them?

Their range is wide. Not only in distance (4000 miles between London and Chicago) but also in time (over 10 years between the founding of the JCG and the BMC) and their relationship to the 'jazz world'. New York (JCG formed 1964) is at the centre, the metropolis, and in relation to it Chicago (AACM formed 1965) is like a province, and England a colonial outpost. Inside England the relationship between metropolitan London (MC formed 1970) and provincial Bristol (BMC formed 1975) echoes that between New York and Chicago.

Thus there is a suggestion of the collective idea being slowly disseminated from the centre. The <u>idea</u> itself might

have arisen partly in this way. The later organisations were certainly aware of the existence of the earlier ones, but as I showed in each case the elaboration of the idea, which determined the nature of each organisation, was very much a response to local circumstances.

However, the musical influences were important. The musicians of both the AACM and the MC were inspired musically by the New York free jazz of the early 1960s which (a little later) found its political expression manifested in the JCG. Many of the musicians in BMC were inspired by all three of the other groups (amongst others, but these three were definitely the most significant inspirations). If the social meanings that I have described are in fact expressed by the music, then it would not be unreasonable to suggest that the idea of collective organisation is actually carried in the music itself and that was partly how it was disseminated. Thus, just as I said in Chapter two that for straight music the hierarchy of composer, conductor, players, audience is simply seen as the 'right and proper' way of making music, so for jazz/improvised music a collective or co-operative organisation encouraging equality and participation can be seen as 'right and proper'. The difference being that in the latter case, because this concept opposes the dominant culture it operates at a much more conscious level.

But the cultural relationships are not just internal to the jazz world. While the music itself has always expressed meanings which are opposed to the dominant culture, its position with respect to the commercial music market place has been very varied. At times particular styles or individual musicians have gained a substantial part of this market. The swing bands of the 30s, British trad of the 1950s, Dave Brubeck, Miles Davis... Nevertheless, the context for the four collectives is the progressive exclusion of jazz and improvised music from the market place, and this is another explanation for their positions in time.

Thus, the "hole in the recording of jazz" that Paul Bley referred to at the end of the 1960s was caused by the complete domination of the market place by rock music (much of it English). But the other side of this was that in England some of the commercial record companies were willing to take risks with new sorts of music when they had no firm idea about its commercial potential. Several large companies recorded the London free improvisors in their formative years (Tony Oxley, the Spontaneous Music Ensemble, AMM, The People Band), and Bristol musician Ron Caines was able to get a recording deal with his progressive rock group 'East of Eden'. These were all quickly 'dropped' by the record companies, of course, and none of these records was obtainable for long. But the point is that, on the one hand, the records were important both musically and in establishing and publicising the musicians, and on the other hand, when they were 'dropped' this was a part of the process by which the musicians learnt the 'true' nature of the music business and were prompted to take a collective and self-reliant approach to their problems.

By the middle 1970s the position was reversed. Jazz of most sorts had returned to the American musical market place and many of the musicians who had been in the JCG such as Bley, Archie Shepp and Cecil Taylor became relatively secure economically and musically. In England jazz remained a very minor part of the market place. The small market position it did have was dominated by American musicians and the free improvisors of the MC and BMC continued to rely on collective and self-help structures. Ron Caines, as I described, had difficulty in making <u>any</u> of his activities pay.

It is these real historical and structural links between the four collectives and their musics that make a comparison both legitimate and necessary. It is the dynamic nature of these links that gives some depth of meaning to the much-heralded notion of the internationality of jazz. So often this notion is simply used as a way of ending otherwise thoughtful jazz-

books on a banal note of brotherhood and humanity:

> One recorded phrase from a great improvisor can, at the same moment, inspire listeners in many different lands. Jazz has slowly become an international music whose sounds can bridge differences of class, creed and language.
>
> John Chilton, Jazz, p.161.

Chilton's statement is true enough as far as it goes. But by omitting all the mediating factors between the individual and the mass of cultural expression ("bridging" some of them), Chilton ignores many of the transformations and nuances of meaning that the music goes through and that I have attempted to highlight in this thesis.

What, then, are the differences in the four musics and collectives that point to these differences in meaning?

These have all been pointed out already in the body of the thesis, but for the sake of clarity, and to remind the reader, I will now very briefly summarise each organisation and its music, mentioning only the features that are most significant for comparison.

I will describe four aspects of each organisation. Firstly, the sorts of people who were members and the level of their professional ambitions. Secondly, the organisation's relationships to a community (racial or otherwise) and to the world jazz audience (market place). Thirdly, the internal relationship within the organisation and its open-ness to new members. Fourthly, the economic policy.

I will also describe four aspects of each music. Firstly, the sorts of collective relationships that are in the music. Secondly, the music's relationship to the jazz tradition.

Thirdly, the musicians' relationships to their instruments. Fourthly, the overall musical stance of the musicians.

Historically, first was the Jazz Composers' Guild. It was made up of fourteen young avant-garde jazz musicians, Black and white, most of whom had come to New York from other parts of the USA (or Europe) specifically to establish themselves as professional jazz musicians, artistically and economically. They had no direct relationship to a community, but many of them had already established a strong relationship with the world jazz audience, having built up international reputations by recording and travelling. Internally the relationships were democratic and equal, but since Bill Dixon formed the organisation, decided who would be in it and chaired most of the meetings, his views carried much more weight than anyone else's. Although a few new members were allowed in after it started it was basically a closed grouping. Economically it acted like a trade union, removing the members from the market place in the belief that this would procure a better deal for them.

I didn't describe the music of the JCG in detail, apart from saying that there were important differences between individuals. However, in general their music can be seen as an extension of the early 1960s avant-garde that was described in Chapter three (John Coltrane, Ornette Coleman, Cecil Taylor). The collectivity of this music was based on <u>all</u> the members of the group expressing themselves as intensely as possible. Previous conventions about leading and accompanying roles were transcended and the group was created by a fusing together of these intense personal statements. This intensity was built on extending instrumental techniques in original ways and there was a commitment to virtuosity. The music was consciously seen as the legitimate avant-garde of the Black American jazz tradition by the musicians, and was accepted as this by

audiences. The musicians' stance was completely serious and 'artistic' in that they saw themselves as developing an art form to a higher level.

The core of the AACM when it started in 1965 was a local group of Black musicians in Chicago, mostly in their twenties and early thirties, who had strong professional ambitions but were also committed to developing their music in the context of their community. Through its fifteen year existence it has catered for the needs of younger and older groups of musicians and has also attracted musicians from elsewhere in the USA to Chicago to take part. Its relationship to the Black community in Chicago has been maintained primarily through the free music school that it runs and through concert promotions in the South side. The relationship with the world jazz audience has developed only gradually, but now many of the musicians are firmly established with international reputations. Internally the AACM is run on a democratic basis, with officers being elected and decisions being made collectively, but with an informal system of seniority with the views of the 'elders' carrying more weight. (John Jackson and other members were conscious of the similarity between this way of making decisions and that of traditional African societies.) It is relatively easy for Black musicians to become members provided they can demonstrate their commitment and gain the vote of the majority of members. For white musicians it is very difficult. They have only been allowed in if they have very strong social as well as musical links with the Black community, and there have been very few. The AACM was run almost non-economically. The events were considered primary, musicians played for door takings, and running costs were paid from members subscriptions. No united action was taken against the market place and only in the last few years has the AACM started receiving government grants.

The music of the AACM was marked very much by individual understatement and this allowed more space for the collectivity to develop reciprocally between the musicians rather than by the 'fusing together' of the JCG. The AACM also saw itself as being a development from the Black jazz tradition, but rather than being simply the next step on, they incorporated much more of the tradition untransformed and built up their music by the combination of very varied styles drawing on the whole history of Black music. Whilst being committed to developing instrumental techniques, they were also happy to use simple or even simplistic musical devices as a means of contrast. All this required a different stance. Thus, as well as being committed artists, they also used traditions of entertainment, and implied attitudes including irony and parody to what they were doing.

Most of the seven members of the Musicians' Co-operative were young musicians who came to London from other parts of England to establish themselves as professional musicians, artistically and economically. They thus had no direct relationship with a community, and when the MC formed they had only just begun to develop a relationship with the world jazz audience. They sought to develop the latter by concentrating on concert promotions in London and through publishing records. Internally they were organised democratically, sharing responsibilities and work. They were a closed co-operative primarily dedicated to furthering their own interests. Only when the organisation was beginning to disintegrate were other musicians allowed to become members. Since they had virtually no stake in the market place they were unable to apply pressure there, so their economic policy was directed to procuring subsidy for their concerts from the government sponsorship bodies. However, their actual activity was slightly wider than the grants supported.

The music of the MC concentrated heavily on free improvisation and thus the collective relationships were very much to the fore. They included both the intense 'fusing together' approach of the JCG and the 'reciprocal understatement' of the AACM. Most of the musicians had been inspired by the jazz tradition and their music had clear links with it, but many of the stylistic features of that idiom were not present. This, together with the geographical and social distance from Black America, has meant that the world jazz audience has not really accepted this music as being the legitimate jazz avant-garde. The instrumental approach favoured by the members is one of extreme technical virtuosity, together with the development of highly personal vocabularies of new sounds. Their concern with the physical exploration of sound added an element of the scientist to their stance, which was basically that of the committed artist.

The musicians who started the Bristol Musicians' Co-operative were all young and local. A few had professional ambitions, but like the members of the AACM they felt they should be able to develop their music in relation to their own community. This has been expressed through their steady stream of concerts and workshops, deliberately made easily accessible for local musicians and listeners to take part in. They have had almost no relationship with the world jazz audience. A few members tour fairly regularly in Europe and have recorded a little, but overall this is not an important part of the organisation. Internally the BMC is run democratically with jobs being allocated voluntarily, but again the views of the longstanding members carry slightly more weight. Anyone may join the organisation and it now includes a wide range of members from highly skilled experienced musicians to beginners and also a few non-musicians. It has also attracted a few musicians from elsewhere in England. Like the early AACM it is run almost non-economically with the vast majority of activities being

funded only by door-takings; but government subsidy has been received to pay professional rates for a small proportion of the concerts.

The music of the BMC is much more varied than the other collectives, but I concentrated on that of the more experienced core members. Collectivity is very important. Often it is the actual starting point for the music and there is emphasis on participation, on encouraging free improvisation to be taken up on a wider scale as a very accessible form of creative expression. The relationship to the Black jazz tradition is varied too. At this distance from the centre of the jazz world, the strong cultural meanings of jazz may be overshadowed by its nature as being a centrally produced market commodity. Some members of BMC have no connection with the jazz tradition anyway, but for those that had grown up with it, it became something that they wanted to get away from. Instrumentally there is no commitment to technical virtuosity like the MC's but there is an emphasis on exploring new and personal sound vocabularies and using them spontaneously. Also a willingness to use <u>any</u> sound. The general stance of the musicians is practical. It includes doing the music and encouraging others to do it and is thus neither an 'art' or an 'entertainment' stance.

I hope these brief summaries have served to remind the reader of the detailed accounts of social meaning in each chapter and of how these accounts give support to the general propositions about social meaning that are contained in Chapter two.

A lot of the weight behind my arguments has been provided, as I said it would be, by the words of the musicians themselves. Thus rather than using interviews as straight evidence or data to be interpreted, I have often interwoven them into my own arguments and have tried to build up a complex picture which presents the musicians' views as well as my own. However, if we now take a step back and look at the different ways that verbal language is used and the different concepts that are dominant in each collective, we can see a parallel to the social meanings that are expressed in the music.

In the Chicago chapter it can be seen that the verbal language of the musicians, like their music, comes out of Black culture. I am not talking about Black slang here, because hardly any was used in the quotes I selected. Rather I am talking about the way the language makes frequent explicit and implicit references to value systems and social institutions that are specifically Black American. Both the music and the language are based in the community and take their meanings from shared social experience and known truths that are often simply referred to rather than stated explicitly. This is not easy to explain to an outsider. It is the same problem that was referred to in Chapter two of trying to make an implicit mode of communication explicit.

Some of the AACM members were fully aware of this problem. Thus it was certainly not by accident that John Jackson spent a large proportion of his interviews talking at great length about his father and family and the importance of the family as a social institution in the Black community. He realised that this was the only way that aspects of the music's meaning which are implicit could be conveyed to an outsider. The same would apply to the statements by Joseph Jarman and Kahil El'Zabar concerning the spirituality of the music. Again this was a way of referring to truths that are known and shared

without explicitly analysing them. At a different level the statements by Fred Anderson specifically about the musical tradition show the same reference to community, but less consciously. Thus Fred knows what all the musicians are saying in their music because he knows the language. It is a language that has always been part of his life. He can't tell you exactly what they are doing because he knows the language as a musical language which refers directly to his own cultural experience without the mediation of words. All he can do is refer again to that cultural experience in words by saying that all the musicians are basically "doing the same thing". The "same thing" that they are doing, which Fred found so hard to put into words, is referring to this special shared cultural experience of being a member of the Black community in the USA. This explains the significance of the other references by Jackson, Jarman and El'Zabar to the Black culture. The verbal and musical ideas expressed by these musicians are thus implicitly legitimised by the history of Black people in the USA. The musicians in the AACM, being part of that history, simply know the music to be true.

It is in this sense, then, that AACM music is Black music and as long as there remains an identifiable Black community in the USA it will stay as Black music. It won't, for example, merge with the straight music avant-garde to become a generalised avant-garde art music. Or rather, part of it might do that, but there will still be a separate Black strand that refers specifically to the truths of Black America.

In the New York chapter, the language of Paul Bley and, to a lesser degree, Bill Dixon is dominated by the market place. It indicates a direct relationship between the individual and the world, the mediation of community being lost or at least submerged. They speak of their art, and they speak of ways of selling it. To them the music's value in terms of art is

self-evident, and their problem is to make society acknowledge this artistic value by matching it with money. But they have handled this problem in very different ways. Bley is the classic capitalist entrepreneur, buying and selling in the market place, adapting himself to its changing needs. He tests his artistic products and concentrates on the ones that will sell. Dixon, by contrast, has removed himself from dealing directly with the changing market place, and has concentrated on maintaining the artistic value of his work. He has taken up the stance of the pure artist who will continue his work independently and will only sell it if the price is right.

Their relationships with Black culture are less simple. Bley, being a white Canadian, has not grown up within the culture. While he acknowledges the historical dominance of Blacks in the music, he understands it in technical terms rather than social or emotional. Free improvisation he described as "a matter of numbers", which is to say based on relationships which are mathematical rather than emotional, or inter-personal, or cultural.

Dixon, of course, upholds himself as part of the great Black tradition. He is fully aware of the strength of the culture, stating categorically that "all the major innovators have been Black" but feels that many Blacks have failed to live up to this ideal. Thus he talks very disparagingly about many of the younger musicians and some of his own contemporaries. His sense of cultural history not being mediated by a direct involvement in community he thinks of Black music as it ought to be or could be but very rarely is (in his opinion) rather than how it actually is in the world in all its shapes and forms. Thus he stands rather uncomfortably between the two cultures. Often his own version of revolutionary Marxist rhetoric seems to be an intellectual tool for separating himself from the mass of Black people rather than a practical tool for gaining class solidarity. "Musicians are not very bright" he says. Of

course, it is possible that he only discovered that musicians are not very bright as a result of the collapse of the JCG and that his present position was produced by the subsequent disillusionment. But he has certainly held ideals for a long time which have not been met by his experience of the world. His present work, teaching Black music in an upper class New England college, expresses clearly the contradictions of his position.

In the chapters about old England the language of the musicians, like their music, tells an entirely different story. I described in Chapter two how rather than looking inwards to their own culture and community the English musicians were looking outwards to a musical culture that seemed "so much stronger and more authentic" than their own (see page 72). We can see strong evidence for this both for the London musicians and the Bristol ones. Thus in London Evan Parker spoke of the superiority of Leadbelly over Lonnie Donegan, which he felt very strongly while still in his early teens, and Howard Riley spoke of his early playing experiences as being of a kind of jazz that was almost exclusively based on an American model. In Bristol Bob Helson described how he wasted little time on the 'Shadows' ("influenced by their star quality") before going on to what he felt were much deeper and more meaningful forms of music from America. Ron Caines too described how his whole adolescence was completely dominated by American culture (especially music and cinema) to the point that English culture need not have existed so far as he was concerned. However, in a broader sense, its existence was essential because by its weakness and irrelevance it actually helped to strengthen the American culture by comparison.

Jazz in England was more purely a <u>counter</u> culture rather than an <u>alternative</u> culture because it didn't link up with either a broader contemporary culture or a long cultural history as

it did in the USA. In England its specific use was to counter the dominant culture of the moment. Eventually this became problematical, because the roots of the music lay elsewhere and musicians tended to feel that they were involved in a music that was not really their own. Dave Holland described the dilemma for English musicians:

> The thing with European improvised music is that a lot of people took a conscious about turn away from American tradition because it became such a strong compelling factor that it really engulfed a lot of people. I think some musicians felt it to be too strong and so rejected it completely.
>
> I've been into a more inclusive attitude towards the music. I've added rather than excluded stuff. I'm not saying it's any better or worse - I'm just saying it's the way I've tended to work. I always see my stuff as extending what I did last year. I've never wanted to throw away entirely any aspect of what I did; only to see it grow and develop into something else, and that's been my way of working. And that's why I had to come to New York.

Holland thus describes the difference between the European free improvisors and himself in terms of their exclusive and inclusive attitudes (and incidentally the logical development of Holland's attitude is to go to New York). But in terms of the difference between England and America it is more a matter of exactly what is excluded. Thus the tendency for the American musicians would be to exclude anything that can't be easily incorporated into the Black jazz idiom, but for English musicians the tendency would be to exclude anything that does refer directly to the Black jazz idiom.

It is thus in the light of this absence of a strong link with a broad cultural tradition, both historical and contemporary, that we find the London and Bristol musicians talking about the music largely in terms of the actual sound and the physical and social way in which it is produced. There is a tradition

there for them of course, but rather than being the cultural history of a people it is defined in terms of a developing sound (by Evan Parker) or a particular attitude to playing (by Howard Riley). In other words it is seen in purely musical terms.

It is in the same light that we must look at the methods of legitimation used by the musicians as indicated by their overall discussions of the music. Since there is no implicit shared community knowledge that they can simply refer to, they are forced into making highly explicit theoretical analyses of their music using the language and rationality of the dominant culture. Some have become highly skilled at this, but others, being aware of the contradictions involved, have insisted on letting the music speak for itself (Tony Oxley is an example). Even with the most refined theorists of the music, the explicit analysis is often accompanied by an ironic air of reluctance:

> ... the whole business of improvisors writing about improvisation very quickly leads to delusions of grandeur, a complete disregard for any observable truth and galloping aesthetic debility. Whatever happened to the "I just play, man!" man?
>
> Derek Bailey, Musics no.21, p.12.

Thus Derek Bailey, who has written a whole book about improvisation, declined to answer a question from another improvisor about practising. There is an element of coyness in Bailey's response because he is well aware that the only way that "I just play, man!" can really make sense is in a situation where there is in fact a shared knowledge and truth amongst the community that it simply refers to. In England, this shared knowledge can't be relied on and the response would be obscure or ambiguous.

Hence the highly explicit technical and theoretical language used by the English musicians contrasts with both sorts of

language used by the Americans. These being the language of the market place used in New York and the language of implicit meanings used in Chicago (which it was necessary to explain to me as an outsider).

It will be clear that I am personally involved in these problems too, in writing this thesis. In the introduction I spoke of some of the differences between the four sections of the thesis as being partly a reflection of my different relationships with the collectives. It can be seen now though that these differences go much deeper than the accident of my personal history. They arise from the very cultural relationships I have been investigating. That is to say the relationships between an oral/aural culture and a literate culture, between a culture which values the spontaneous moment and makes implicit references to community and one that values rationality and formal hierarchical order, between a counter culture or alternative culture and a dominant culture. This piece of writing is actually a mediation of these cultural relationships and as such is intrinsically involved. Because it is a literate, rational work itself it is inevitably closer in position to those musicians who express themselves in similar terms. This must simply be taken as a limitation of the form and not as an expression of partisanship.

I would like to end by posing the question: why collectives?

In the introduction I gave several reasons for concentrating on collectives, one of which was that I judged them to be important for the future of the music. It can now be seen why this is true. In three cases out of the four (excepting the JCG) the music would be unlikely to exist in anything like its

present form if the collectives weren't there. The collectives arose as a response to an extreme contradiction between cultural and economic pressures. Cultural pressures gave musicians the conviction that they had to make their music in a certain way, and the market told them they couldn't sell it. The natural response was therefore to take steps that enabled them to continue making their music in public situations even though they couldn't sell it. This was in keeping with the content of the music. Thus in these three cases musicians' collectives have been essential for the survival of the music, and I think there will continue to be situations where this is so.

But on a more general level, the collectives represent a way of acting culturally that can be seen to have relevance to much broader areas of culture than jazz and free improvisation, or even music as a whole. For they represent a grass roots response to the 'massification' of culture and the 'objectification' of cultural products. In a sense they are part of the other side of the mass culture coin because, as I have maintained throughout, jazz has only been able to develop as it has to include a strong and meaningful avant-garde as a result of the international market place. Thus, however much the collectives oppose the values of the market place, they can never ignore their historical links with it. But then this is the contradiction of mass culture in general: that, on the one hand, it expresses very strong meanings that are relevant and even enlightening to large numbers of people, but, on the other hand, by selling itself to these people it often takes away the possibility of them creating their own cultural expressions as opposed to consuming those of others.

Musicians collectives, therefore, by their simple insistence on the primacy of cultural creation and participation are part of a counter-culture, a widespread movement to make a culture that fully accepts the participation of different individuals and social groups and is fully aware of the implications of domination by mass culture. It is in this sense that the

making of jazz and improvised music is also an important part of the making of society.

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- As If It Were The Seasons, Delmark DS 417 (includes Anderson and John Jackson)

Roscoe Mitchell - Sound, Delmark DS 408
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Fred Anderson - (with Neighbours) Accents, EMI Electrola IC 066-32854
- Live at Moers Festival, Moers Music MoMu 01056

Lester Bowie - Numbers 1 and 2, Nessa 1

The Art Ensemble of Chicago - People In Sorrow, Nessa 3
- Les Stances A Sophie, Nessa 4
- Certain Blacks, America 30 AM 6098
- A Jackson In Your House, Affinity AFF 9
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- with Fontella Bass, America 30 AM 6117
- The Spiritual, Polydor/Freedom FLP 40108
- Bap-tizum, Atlantic
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- Live at Mandel Hall, Delmark DS 432/433
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- Creative Music 1, Kabell 1
- Reflectativity, Kabell 2
- Song of Humanity, Kabell 3
- Divine Love, ECM 1143

Leo Smith - Spirit Catcher, Nessa
- Solo, Kabell 4

Bill Dixon - Intents and Purposes, RCA FLX1 7331
- Opium for Franz, Pipe Records

Paul Bley - (Jimmy Guiffre Trio) Free Fall, Columbia CS 8764
- Turning Point, Improvising Artists Incorporated 37.38.41
- Bley/Peacock Synthesizer Show, Polydor S 244.046
- Open To Love, (solo piano) ECM 1023

Leadbelly - Take This Hammer

Lonnie Donegan - Take This Hammer

London Jazz Composers' Orchestra - Ode, Incus 6/7

Tony Oxley - Ichnos, RCA Victor SF 8215

Evan Parker, Paul Lytton - Collective Calls (Urban), Incus 5

Spontaneous Music Ensemble - Oliv, Polydor Standard 2384 009
- Karyobin, Island ILPS 9079

Music Improvisation Company - 1968-70, Incus 17
- ECM 1005

Derek Bailey, Han Bennink - ICP 004

Derek Bailey, Han Bennink, Evan Parker - The Topography of the Lungs, Incus 1

Iskra 1903 - Incus 3/4
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Howard Riley, Barry Guy, Tony Oxley - Synopsis, Incus 13

Company - Incus 21, 23, 25, 26, 28, 29, 30, (various combinations of Derek Bailey, Han Bennink, Steve Beresford, Anthony Braxton, Lol Coxhill, Tristan Honsinger, Steve Lacy, Evan Parker, Maarten van Regteren Altena, Leo Smith)

The following are solo records by members of the Musicians' Co-operative:

Derek Bailey - Lot 74, Incus 12

Evan Parker - Monoceros, Incus 27

Paul Rutherford - Old Moers Almanac, Moers Music MoMu 01014

Tony Oxley - Incus 8 (solos and groups)

Howard Riley - The Toronto Concert, Vinyl VS 112

Paul Lytton - The Inclined Stick, Po Torch 004

Barry Guy - Statements V-XI, Incus 22

East of Eden (Ron Caines) - Mercator Projected, Deram SML 1038
- Snafu, Deram SML 1050

Both Hands Free - Use From the Pocket, Zyzzle 1

Bob Helson - Noise Reduction, Zyzzle 3 (cassette)

Bob Helson, Ian Menter (with others) - Unpopular Music, Zyzzle 5 (cassette)

2. Availability

Many of these records are no longer available to buy. Occasionally they turn up second hand, and some may be available through libraries. However, the list is not meant to represent the 'best' by each musician and other records by the same groups or individuals should satisfy general curiosity (although they aren't referred to directly in the text). I know of only three shops in England

that carry a large stock of free improvisation and avant-garde jazz:

Collett's, Shaftesbury Avenue, London WC1.

Honest Jon's, 281 Camden High Street, London NW1.

The Public House Bookshop, 21 Little Preston Street, Brighton.

3. Addresses

A.A.C.M. - 1059 West 107th Place, Chicago, 60643, U.S.A.

Bristol Musicians' Co-operative - 36 York Road, Montpelier, Bristol 6.

(London Musicians' Collective - 42 Gloucester Avenue, London NW1.)

ACKOWLEDGMENTS

As well as the musicians whose words have appeared, I would like to thank the many others who gave me their time to talk, and whose music was the original inspiration for this thesis. It was primarily to achieve clarity in the overall form of the work that I finally restricted the musicians quoted to a few in each collective. However the words that don't appear have been equally important in building my conception of the content I should aim to express.

People other than musicians have given me very valuable help too. Early on in England I discussed the project with Charles Fox and Charles Alexander. Valerie Wilmer was kind enough not only to discuss and advise, but also to show me the manuscript of 'As Serious As Your Life' before publication, and to provide me with useful contacts in Chicago and New York. During my American fieldwork I was helped in Chicago by Richard Draney, Sparky Hill, Sharon Friedman, Ted Panken, Chuck Nessa, Bob Koestor, Terry Martin, John Litweiler and Jerry Figi; and in New York by Dan and Karen Casey and Susan Bair. During the writing up stage Derek Bailey very kindly showed me his manuscript ('Improvisation: Its Nature and Practice in Music') before publication, and Ian Menter and Willie Guy both read parts of my manuscript and made useful suggestions.

Throughout the project I have been given support and encouragement in many different ways by my supervisor, Mick Lineton, and by my family, Annie Menter, Sam Menter, Alice Menter and Ben Menter.

Finally, I would like to thank Maralyn McDowell for typing and Nancy Lineton for printing.